



Horizon

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE & ART

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Howard Evans
R. F. Harrod
L. S. Little
George Orwell
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HORIZON

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MACMILLAN

COMMENT

In the last number *Horizon* discussed how it could entertain the reader. About its relationship with the author little has been said since the original advertisement set out 'to help to free writers from journalism by welcoming unpopular forms and by encouraging those contributions which can be reprinted'. Beneath its superficial tolerance journalism is one of the most rigid and exacting of occupations, and those authors who decide 'to make a little extra money that way' are unable ultimately to get it by any other. Journalism has certain very unpleasant defects. It condemns a writer to perpetual brightness, uniformity, brevity, and overproduction, to work which will not stand up to the board covers of a book while destroying the leisure and stamina necessary to write one. The author's curve, instead of mounting to its climax in a free parabola, is flattened out by the weight of the Press and often tail-spins to a nervous breakdown. These evils a monthly review can do something to alleviate by encouraging authors to write on the subjects about which their feelings are deepest, by asking for thought and imagination instead of the overwhelming brightness by which so many of us are dazzled, and by affording them as much space as possible. To encourage creative work *Horizon* has had to exclude chronicles of the cinema and the theatre, and the delights of a correspondence column, and its reward is to publish work which can find a market nowhere else and which, since it can be reprinted in book form, both draws the reader's attention to such books, and helps the author to compile material for them.

The three most neglected forms to-day are the long poem, the critical essay, and the long short story. In this number we print a poem by Auden which is not so much a lyric as an elaborate piece of thinking aloud and a long essay forming part of a book of Orwell's, 'Inside the

Whale' which Gollancz is bringing out in the spring. We are still looking for a long short story.

Another problem is reviewing. In the present number we have no reviews but, although they are generally ephemeral and the least individual feature of a monthly paper, they are indispensable, and so will be reinstated, including a summing up of Housman by Stephen Spender and of French books for 1939 by Montgomery Belgion.

We must record a further disappointment. Owing to his duties at the Ministry of Information Sir Kenneth Clark is unable to edit a special art number, but we hope to spread the articles on and by young English painters through future numbers, together with the sixteen illustrations which subscribers were promised.

The other way in which *Horizon* can be of use to writers is by discovering new talent. In this issue all the names are known, Philip Toynbee has published a novel, and Howard Evans is the pseudonym of a reviewer in the toils of the Capitalist Press. But it is not enough to attempt a synthesis between the æsthetic Twenties and the puritan Thirties, and in the numbers which immediately follow *Horizon* will publish, besides Somerset Maugham on the Thriller, Michael Redgrave on the Theatre, and an American letter by Louis MacNiece, poems by Terence Heywood, the Rev. F. Buchanan, Laurence Lee, L. S. Little, Vijaya-Tunga and Kiedrich Rhys, stories by Nicholas Moore, Patrick White, Michael Wharton and J. Maclaren Ross, and essays by R. Ironside and Clement Greenberg. One of these writers is a young working man, and another is on the dole.

One word more. We owe an explanation to those who have commented on our courage in appearing at the present time. This is undeserved, for no courage is required to perform with greater intensity in a crisis a series of actions which would be pleasurable on any occasion, and we betray no more fortitude in bringing out this magazine than does a condemned criminal on his last morning who, after enjoying a large breakfast, falls asleep, and dreams of a reprieve.

W. H. AUDEN

IN MEMORY OF
SIGMUND FREUD

When there are so many we shall have to mourn,
When grief has been made so public and exposed
 To the critique of a whole epoch
 The frailty of our conscience and anguish,

Of whom shall we speak? For every day they die
Among us, those who were doing us some good
 And knew it was never enough but
 Hoped to improve a little by living.

Such was this doctor. Still at eighty he wished
To think of our life from whose unruliness
 So many plausible young futures
 With threats and flattery ask obedience.

But his wish was denied him; he closed his eyes
Upon that last picture common to us all
 Of problems like relatives standing
 Puzzled and jealous about our dying.

For about him to the very end were still
Those he had studied, the nervous and the nights,
 And shades that still waited to enter
 The bright circle of his recognition

Turned elsewhere with their disappointment, as he
Was taken away from his old interest
 To go back to the earth in London,
 An important Jew who died in exile.

Only Hate was happy hoping to augment
His practice, and his shabby clientele
Who think they can be cured by killing
And covering their gardens with ashes.

They are still alive but in a world he changed
Simply by looking back with no false regrets;
All that he did was to remember
Like the old and be honest like children.

He wasn't clever at all; he merely told
The unhappy Present to recite the Past
Like a poetry lesson till sooner
Or later it faltered at the line where

Long ago the accusations had begun,
And suddenly knew by whom it had been judged,
How rich life had been and how silly,
And was life-forgiven and more humble;

Able to approach the Future as a friend
Without a wardrobe of excuses, without
A set mask of rectitude or an
Embarrassing over-familiar gesture.

No wonder the ancient cultures of conceit
In his technique of unsettlement foresaw
The fall of princes, the collapse of
Their lucrative patterns of frustration.

If he succeeded, why, the Generalised Life
Would become impossible, the monolith
Of State be broken and prevented
The co-operation of avengers.

Of course they called on God; but he went his way
Down among the Lost People like Dante, down
To the stinking fosse where the injured
Lead the ugly life of the rejected;

And showed us what evil is; not as we thought
Deeds that must be punished, but our lack of faith,
Our dishonest mood of denial,
The concupiscence of the oppressor.

And if something of the autocratic pose,
The parental strictness he distrusted, still
Clung to his utterance and features,
It was a protective imitation

For one who lived among enemies so long;
If often he was wrong and at times absurd,
To us he is no more a person
Now but a whole climate of opinion

Under whom we conduct our differing lives:
Like weather he can only hinder or help;
The proud can still be proud but find it
A little harder, and the tyrant tries

To make him do but doesn't care for him much.
He quietly surrounds all our habits of growth:
He extends till the tired in even
The remotest most miserable duchy

Are aware of the change in their bones and cheered;
And the child unlucky in his little State,
Some hearth where freedom is excluded,
A hive whose honey is fear and worry,

Feels calmer now and somehow assured of escape.
While, as they lie in the grass of our neglect,
So many long-forgotten objects,
Revealed by his undiscouraged shining,

Are returned to us and made precious again;
Games that we thought we must stop when we grew up,
Little noises we dared not laugh at,
Faces we made when no one was looking.

But he wishes us more than this;—to be free
Is often to be lonely—he would unite
 The unequal moieties fractured
 By our own well-meaning sense of justice.

Would restore to the larger the wit and will
The smaller possesses but can only use
 For arid disputes, would give back to
 The son the mother's richness of feeling.

But he would have us remember most of all
To be enthusiastic over the night,
 Not only for the sense of wonder
 It alone can give, but also

Because it needs our love; for with sad eyes
Its delectable creatures look up and beg
 Us dumbly to ask them to follow:
 They are exiles who long for the future

That lies in our power; they too would rejoice
If allowed to serve enlightenment like him,
 Even to bear our cry of 'Judas'
 As he did, and all must bear who serve it.

One rational voice is dumb; over a grave
The household of impulse mourns one dearly loved:
 Sad is Eros, builder of cities,
 And weeping anarchic Aphrodite.

R. F. HARROD

PEACE AIMS AND ECONOMICS

It must be in a chastened mood that one approaches the post-war problem. In the event of victory the opportunity of building a new world can hardly be as favourable as that of 1919. How can we improve on our record between the two wars? The problems of the present world situation are without precedent: we have no copy-book maxims to fall back upon, no lessons of experience, science has not yet mastered the problems of human relations, and, perhaps because wise-saws have no cogency in a novel situation, the generation of wise men has passed away.

There is an old-fashioned maxim that still finds favour among certain people, the idea of shaking hands after a fight and relying upon the generous gesture to go straight to the heart of the defeated foe. This is certainly in line with public school tradition, but the psychology implied is suspect in the extreme. The rush of chivalrous feeling may mellow an overweening spirit of victory; but the emotional discords of the vanquished are not likely to be so easily resolved.

The one certain thing in the tangle of conflicting considerations about the post-war problem is that it is our primary duty as well as our primary interest to have 'peace aims' which the French can whole-heartedly endorse. The greatest mistake of all after 1919 was the split between French and British policy, and it would be a disaster to secure peace terms again, to which the British and French had their own conflicting sets of mental reservations. It is supremely in the interest of our future security to avoid repetition of this mistake. And it is also our supreme duty to enter to the fullest degree into French feelings from the

very beginning. Too much has already been written in the press about peace aims, in which the French point of view is neglected. After all, our first call of honour is to our allies. In 1914 we might be said in some sense to have come to the rescue of the French; but in 1939 we have joined together on an equal footing to deal with the wreckage of what in the last ten years at least has been predominantly British policy. It would be the height of dishonour to stage a display of British sporting instinct in a peace policy to which the French could not give their unquestioning support.

Good sense is therefore likely to require a settlement, in the first instance, resembling that of 1919 in at least one feature, namely, one-sided German disarmament. General disarmament with international inspection might be ideal, but would not be feasible without the collaboration of a number of not too tractable neutrals. German disarmament is indispensable. That is straightforward enough. But the situation will be uneasy, and it is impossible to look forward to it with complete confidence, because the same forces which operated after 1919 may operate again, human nature being what it is, to induce in due time a weakness in the enforcement of the disarmament clauses and so lead to renewed German hope of redress by force. Are we to be for ever the victims of the operation of this cycle with its recurrent disasters?

I believe that there is a way out, not by the pursuit of an idealist and impractical political solution, but by turning attention to another field, that of economics. It is generally agreed that the insistence on long-term reparation payments of large and unspecified amounts after the last war was a mistake, which should not be repeated. But this is only a minor aspect of the problem of economic reconstruction.

There is much to be said for the view that the resurgence of German militarism was much less due to the Treaty of Versailles than to the economic depression of 1929-1933, which hit Germany with great severity. No doubt the Treaty, or, rather, defeat in the last war, a much more

agitating factor than any clauses in the Treaty itself, provided a fertile soil for future troubles. But if the rising tide of prosperity in Germany which reached its culmination in 1929 had gone on from strength to strength, there is little likelihood that the Nazi revolution would have taken place. It follows that a peace aim of first importance is to secure an economic reconstruction which makes it impossible for the German people again to be plunged into the economic distresses of 1929-1933.

This aim comprises far more than the merely negative one of not imposing long-term reparation payments. What was the great German depression of 1929-1933? It was part of a world-wide depression, which descended upon all countries. It is quite wrong to relate that German depression primarily to her reparation burden. It must be remembered that the United States, the principal ultimate receiver of reparations, was equally severely hit. To say that the German depression was due to reparations is about as sensible as saying that the British depression of the same period was due to the wickedness of the Labour Government, which was in power at that time. All the separate depressions were part of a world-wide phenomenon for which it is necessary to seek world-wide causes. It is the problem of the Trade Cycle that has to be faced.

In this country in the period between the wars we regarded the problem with great indifference. Officially it was never recognised to be a problem; only in the depth of depression was there a certain political flurry in which some obsolete and inapposite catchwords about the need for economy and balancing the budget were unearthed. Even after this lesson the indifference continued; no rational plans were made to meet the recurrence of slump, which indeed began its baleful course in 1937, and was only tided over by a substantial measure of re-armament. We shall need to shake ourselves from this sluggish torpor. Religious people sometimes like to say that the fundamental cause of war is our own sinfulness. This might not unreasonably be interpreted in this instance as our own passiveness, or

that of the government for which we were democratically responsible, in the face of a scourge which afflicted British and Germans alike. It is, however, fair to add that by the time that our experience fairly pointed to the need for drastic action against the cycle, it was too late to arrest the momentum of German revolution.

In the event of victory there will be an opportunity to tackle the problem afresh and a need to start quickly. It will be the duty of the victors to make life in Europe safe from the evil of post-war depression on the one hand and inflation on the other. That can only be done by a concerted effort in which victors and vanquished collaborate.

Hitherto those who have elaborated plans for curing depression and controlling the trade cycle have had necessarily to work within the national setting. They have had to take fluctuations in the export markets of their country, in the world price-level, in the opportunities for investment overseas, as necessary evils beyond their control. They may have known all the time that a radical solution of the problem of periodic depression required or would be greatly facilitated by international collaboration, but it was useless to cry for the moon.

If, then, these problems are to be seriously tackled, and they will certainly be extremely urgent when war is over, there seems to be a strong case for delegating powers to a new international authority and renouncing, at least provisionally, some part of national sovereignty within a defined sphere. And since the tasks of this international authority would be wholly new, having no direct relation to political ambitions, the misuse of armaments or nationalist aspirations, there is no reason why ex-enemies should not collaborate in their solution on an equal footing from the very beginning. The adhesion of ex-neutrals should be welcomed, and, where this could not be secured, some means of liaison with the remaining countries should be practicable.

Both the immediate and long-run scope of the work of the authority should be huge. Physical re-construction, the

rehabilitation of currencies and restoration of the channels of foreign trade would be its first concern; but looming closely behind, a much more thorny problem, is the prevention of post-war unemployment in all countries concerned.

Since it is envisaged that the authority would not merely recommend, but act, it must have money, preferably plenty of money. In view of the special nature of its tasks, the method of loan would probably be the most appropriate means of securing it. There should be a joint and several guarantee of interest in the first instance by the adhering states, subject to a limitation on the liability of small states, the burden to be divided equitably.

Beyond post-war unemployment are the recurrent problems of the trade cycle. The authority surveying its area as a single economic unit would be responsible for tapping the available savings within it, which are not in the least likely to run dry, in order to carry out large-scale improvements designed to bring the greatest economic benefit to the area considered as a whole. It would also have problems connected with the balance of production of different categories of goods in different parts of the world, with the relative movements of prices, the international balance of payments, the course of monetary values, the policies of central banks; and it would not neglect migration and settlement.

It would have to employ a large and growing civil service, giving ample scope for the special talents of aspiring German administrators, as of others. Mixed commissions would go forth to backward parts of the earth's surface, with powers to carry out schemes of development. Problems of economic planning merge into those of the application of the physical sciences. The fruits of technological research in the participating countries would be pooled, and able technologists employed regardless of national origin.

The crux of this proposal may best be explained by reference to the colonies. The woeful side of war is that it entails not only suffering and bloodshed, but also, save in exceptionally favourable circumstances, the defeat of one

side and a continuance of certain psychological conditions in the breast of the defeated people. It is no use running away from that fact, it must be faced. That means that the colonies of the victors must continue to be painted the same colours on the map as before; the strategic points must be held; there can be no political surrender of bases or sources of military strength.

But the work of the international authority may be of such a kind, that it needs to take over much of the detailed work of colonial administration. Provided that the ultimate political, or, call it, military, control is retained, there is no objection to this. British colonial civil servants must suppress their vexation. It should be emphasized that the development of backward areas is not to be identified with exploitation in the interest of a capitalist class or dominant race. Development implies a world wide division of labour in accordance with the capacities of regions or peoples. The principle of trusteeship must be accepted. This involves full regard for the welfare and internal social harmony of the natives. It may indeed be argued that the principle of trusteeship requires a better understanding of anthropology than typical British colonial administrators are usually well qualified to absorb. The international authority would take cognisance of the most expert anthropological knowledge drawn from all participating nations.

But, it may be argued, all this will never do, because, argue it as you will, the ex-defeated nation will never forget or forgive the fact that the colonial areas are still painted the wrong colour. If that is so, the experiment will have been at worst harmless. But is it necessarily so?

May it not be that this great work, involving thousands of fascinating and at the same time strenuous problems of economics, technology, anthropology, carrying in its train full employment for the brain workers, administrators and manual workers of all nations concerned, and securing a higher degree of prosperity than they have yet known, will, after a sufficient lapse of time, bring forgetfulness? After the last war these problems were not tackled, and the

ex-vanquished reverted to their old sores for lack of other interests. Under the plan proposed it would soon be seen that the international authority, or, rather, the comity of nations which it represented, had the substance of power, interest and enjoyment, and the armed authority but the shadow. The military commander, reduced ultimately to the mere policeman, might in the due process of time lose his prestige, and the faded Union Jack, the rusty gun and the dilapidated governor-general might come to be regarded as the quaint relics of a decaying superstition, once an all powerful religion. In a still remoter future it might be considered a harmless economy to sweep away these relics.

The plan which I have very briefly sketched may be regarded as a sort of inverted Federal Unionism. Federal Unionists, basing themselves on the premise that foreign policy and arms are the most important matters of politics, propose to transfer them to an international authority. The plan which I propose reserves these matters to national governments, but transfers subjects which, albeit in one sense for the time being less important, would become much more important, if civilization survives its present doldrums.

Foreign policy and arms will remain important so long as there is a defeated nation which sees an opportunity of reversing a recent verdict by their means. Post war measures must therefore be primarily judged by their power to withhold such an opportunity. The criticism of official Federal Unionism is that it endangers a weakening in the forces responsible for maintaining the new status quo. Will the ex-British navy be kept at top efficiency by an international committee? The practice of foreign policy and war, old-fashioned and retrograde habits, draws its cunning in part from quasi-instinctive and traditional ingredients in man's nature. The transference of responsibility for these from nations, with their innate organic vitality, to an international committee with a brand new paper constitution is likely to be a cause of weakness and so to give the ex-defeated nation yet another chance of making trouble.

The subjects, on the other hand, which I propose to transfer are new, shot through with modern sophistication, the paradise of progressive, rational, scientific man, in which his instinctive reactions are almost always wrong. Our experience so far has been that national governments are quite incapable of dealing with these problems; and reason suggests that international collaboration is required for their successful solution.

Furthermore from the point of view of civilised progress they are the important subjects. Thus the newly constituted sovereign would be sovereign in all that really matters, in all, anyhow, that will matter if we can but turn the corner upon our present fratricidal pre-occupations.

What we want is that this war should be the last chapter in the history of European warfare. It is greatly to be regretted that this chapter should close with the defeat of one party. But that sad ending was probably ordained on the day when the German nation decided to look with favour upon Nazi doctrines; the tragedy is already implicit in the story. This war can only be made the end of European warfare by an iron resolution to maintain the political status quo which results from it, whatever the heartburnings, and so abolish the temptation to look upon international 'politics' as a possible source of gain or glory.

That being that, we should build our hopes on the burgeoning of goodwill and good fellowship in another department of human affairs. When the will and mind of man are harnessed to the endeavour to solve the great problems of economics and sociology, the danger of renewed warfare may fade, because that kind of politics itself will have lost its charm and the fussy emotions of nationalistic pride have become moribund. The human spirit will have taken flight in another direction.

HOWARD EVANS

COMMUNIST POLICY AND THE INTELLECTUALS

For over two years, a large section of the English intelligentsia* has been becoming increasingly hostile towards the Soviet Union. It has also been showing a marked preference for the false 'totalitarian' conception of Nazi Germany as a new type of state no longer serving the interests of German Imperialism. It has been waiting, one might even say longing, for an excuse to declare itself equally anti-Soviet and anti-Nazi. This excuse has now been provided by the war situation and events since—and including—the Soviet German non-aggression pact.

The *trahison des clercs* which Benda castigated after the last war is repeating itself, though with a difference according to the manner of historical repetitions. Once again the intellectuals, as a class or group, have betrayed their social function of finding out the truth and telling it to people.

The basic reason for this is simple enough. Soviet Russia is a working class state and its policy is conducted in the interests of the working class. The English intellectuals remain economically and ideologically tied to the capitalism which has suckled them—even if not always on Grade A. They have been unable to think their way free from these ties, and no wonder for they refuse to recognize their

*Unnecessary to demonstrate the wide variety of types which compose the intelligentsia, e.g., the staff and regular contributors of its principal organ, "The New Statesman", with such diverse figures as Kingsley Martin, Y.Y., V. S. Pritchett towards the middlebrow ("anything for a quiet time") end, and E. M. Forster, Raymond Mortimer, and *Horizon's* editor, Cyril Connolly, towards the highbrow ("lament for the lost *douceur de vivre*") end.

existence. Instead they congratulate themselves on being first class passengers in the coach to progress, and the more sophisticated among them point to their record of devoted service *pour épater les bourgeois*. "It is not our fault," they say, "if you harsh narrow, Marxist anabaptists misunderstand our flirtations with Trotsky or the delightfully exciting ideas of the anarchists. We can't help it if we find your communism so dreary, your Russia so drab, your Stalin so grim."

In fact, however, their hostility towards Communism and the Soviet Union is not based on careful study. Most of them are quite content to leave Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin unread* and get the "real lowdown" from Dr. Borkenau.† Gide's slight personal impressions count far more with them than the Webb's detailed survey with its incontrovertibly favourable conclusions. Their hostility is really due to an inner realisation that communism threatens their existence as a semi-detached privileged group within the orbit of the ruling class, that its practice which entails loyal co-operation with the working class in the construction of classless society, will mean the intrusion of change and disturbance into their private lives. War also entails change and disturbance, but the intellectuals are rooted both economically and emotionally in the past. They are hoping, whether consciously or unconsciously, for a further "relative stabilisation" of capitalism such as followed the last war, a stabilisation which may last their time.

*Those who have made some attempt to study dialectical materialism, such as Crossman, use the smattering of it which suits their academic purpose and proceed to 'revise,' distort or omit the rest, just as their Russian Menshevik predecessors did. Hogben, that lone outpost of 19th century mechanism, is refreshingly frank about this, claiming to accept a revised version of Marxist economics while rejecting dialectics with infantile glee.

†The expressed aim of Dr. Borkenau's *History of the Communist International* was to show how Stalin had betrayed the revolution. Not content with this, Dr. Borkenau proceeded to show, by way of introduction, how the revolution had already been betrayed by Lenin, and before him by Marx and Engels. One was not in the least surprised to learn that Dr. Borkenau had left the German Communist Party, but one did rather wonder how and *why* he ever joined it.

For these reasons, they blind themselves to the real situation in Europe, support an imperialist war, revile the Soviet Union, and salve their consciences by chattering about Federal Union.

This hoary nostrum, when revived and readvanced by Kautsky before the last war with his theory of 'inter-imperialism' and the possibility of a United States of Europe, was exploded by Lenin as an absurdity for the following reasons: Members of a federation of capitalist powers which pool resources, raw materials, colonies etc. will obviously draw from the pool in proportion to their strength as powers. The only way such super-imperialist schemes can work at all is by increased exploitation of the workers both home and colonial (witness the fate of the mandated territories after the last war). They can provide nothing except possibly a breathing space between further wars. Lenin summed them up as either impossible or impracticable. Professor Hogben, in spite of being an enthusiastic supporter of Federal Union, seems to have read Lenin on the subject, for he writes: "Any federal union which does not provide for a common system of colonial administration to educate backward peoples for self-government will merely prepare the means of war on a larger scale than the present one."

If what I have said is anything like a correct description of the political outlook of a large section of the intellectuals, their righteous fury over Finland is not surprising. Their support of the peace front was never more than lukewarm at the best of times. They have always refused to accept the fundamentally reactionary rôle and calculated war-mongering policy of British Imperialism, preferring to amuse themselves with monkey chatter about the incredible folly of our elder statesmanship etc. Therefore they screamed when Stalin, in order to prevent the war of Chamberlain's dreams (and plans), signed the non-aggression pact with Germany. Therefore they scream when, in order to frustrate the new imperialist plans for switching the war, the Red Army advances against the government of Ryti

and Mannerheim, which they have suddenly discovered to be democratic and supported by the united Finnish people—as if any democratic government would have refused the Soviet terms. And now some of them are beginning to scream for anti-Soviet intervention by France and Britain to help the Finnish Whites.

* * * *

The above is what one communist thinks about the anti-Soviet intellectuals. Probably your editor will feel it is too untrue, too unkind, and not nicely written enough to print. But if his democratic principles should get the better of him I would like to point out that personally I get only a limited satisfaction from discovering that the Marxist analysis of the rôle of the bourgeois intellectuals is entirely correct. From one point of view it is reassuring to find them behaving so exactly according to text book form; it strengthens conviction by providing still further evidence of the scientific accuracy of communism. But it is also depressing. So much so that I feel inclined to try a last minute appeal, though of course this would only be received with loud sneers. History alone will show, but the demonstration process is going to be extremely uncomfortable for all of us. The main responsibility for the betrayal, which has helped to cause untold suffering that might easily have been avoided, rests with the corrupt social democratic movement, which has nowhere been more corrupt or more heavily corrupted than in this country. Unfortunately the intellectuals have played an important part in this betrayal. As it has become inevitable that they should do this there is no point in naïvely speculating how they might have done anything else.

WILLIAM PLOMER

KILVERT'S COUNTRY

August, 1939. A Londoner in the morning, I found myself in the evening helping with the hay on a remote Welsh hillside. To get there I had to go through a small market town which became notorious a few years ago for the discovery that one of its respected citizens, a professional man who used to read the lessons in church, was a murderer. Through the sham-Gothic machicolations of the Jubilee Clock Tower crouching detectives watched him as he crossed from his office to the chemist's to buy arsenic "for dandelions." His first "dandelion" was his wife, neatly done away with in the neat villa with its hanging wire baskets of geraniums and its ornamental ironwork painted dead white. The second "dandelion" was a professional rival. "Excuse fingers!" said the murderer, pressing his guest to a doctored scone. Everybody remembers him, and if a statue had been put up to him his memory could not be more alive. For me the scene of his activities is also familiar as the scene of more innocent events that occurred before he was born: for me the town enshrines two legends, that of a murderer and that of a diner-out and player of croquet.

Arrived at my hillside, where the dense foliage of a sycamore seems almost an architectural adjunct of the grey stone farmhouse, I felt at home although among strangers, for they were hospitable and cheerful, with delightful manners. I hope they were as pleased to know me as I was to know them. There was a special reason for this: I happened to have a detailed knowledge, derived from the diary of that diner-out and player of croquet, of persons and events in the parish seventy years ago. I wanted to know the place as it is now, to see it in detail, and to meet and listen to its inhabitants. My hosts were pleased, I think, by my curiosity. The stuff of that diary, with which

they were already partly familiar, for they too have curiosity and the Welsh love of reading, was largely the stuff of their own knowledge of persons and places, but seen from a different angle and through a temperament—that of an impressionable youngish clergyman who flourished in the eighteen-seventies. His name was Kilvert: two volumes of his diary have been published and have much extended his fame; indeed, he has been compared by reviewers to Dorothy Wordsworth, to Proust, to Pepys, to Amiel, to Gerard Manley Hopkins, and to D. H. Lawrence!

Staying in the region where he wrote his diary, I found myself trying to see people and things from various points of view. I wanted to see them as freshly as possible from my own point of view, though this was partly determined by memories of an earlier visit to the same neighbourhood; I could not help seeing them to some extent from Kilvert's point of view; I wanted to know what the local people, some of whom can remember him, thought about Kilvert and what they think of him now that they know him, much more intimately, through his diary; and I wanted to know their points of view in regard to their surroundings and any other subject on which they might care to express an opinion. All this suggests a purposeful programme and perhaps a ponderous intellectual nosiness, but in fact I was simply out to enjoy myself. I did enjoy myself (a change of environment, good weather, an exciting landscape, human contacts) and I found myself involved in a sort of experiment with time. I hasten to disclaim any visionary powers: what I mean is that being so much concerned with points of view I gained a new impression of part of the pattern of life, of *intersecting planes of experience*, and a strong impression that the people and the place were significant while "the passage of time", as it is so oddly called, was not. I found I could not at all think of time as a thing that "passes" or indeed as a "thing" at all. Everything conspired, so to speak, to show that life, in any particular aspect, can be viewed, like individual character as a combination or crystallisation of certain elementary



ASSOCIATION OF OAKS—by *Graham Sutherland*, 1940

tendencies.

One blazing midday, after a bathe in the ice-cold pool under the ferny waterfall, I made my way over some rough ground to a house called Whitehall. In Kilvert's day it was in ruin, and he has left a charming, nostalgic, and rather Hardy-esque account of it: a house with a past, it had been the scene of wild merrymakings after hard work. Since his day it has been rebuilt and lived in and has again fallen into ruin: the ivy and the owls were once more busy, under a vertical sun, with their spellbinding. Kilvert, it occurred to me as I stood among the ruins, had made allusions to the Franco-Prussian war. My own attachment to this neighbourhood is inextricably mixed up with memories of the German war of 1914-1918, when I was last here; and now there was about to be another German war. I am not trying to establish the slightest direct connection between the tendency of this remote house to fall into ruin and the tendency of the Germans to invade France. I only say that the cliché about "time standing still" suddenly acquired a meaning for me: time became no more than an atmosphere in which every human word or deed gave out a sound, so to speak, which was only an echo or a repetition, and which went on vibrating, but was only audible, like sounds on the wireless, when one happened to be attuned to it.

Nothing that happened to me during this stay in the Welsh countryside is more real to me than something that happened there three winters ago to somebody I never knew. A young married woman with several children, the wife of a farmer away up in the hills, went on horseback on Christmas Eve to the nearest market town (that same town where the murderer lived) to do some Christmas shopping. There was snow on the ground and in the afternoon a wild snowstorm set in. Friends tried to dissuade her from returning home, but off she went: she wanted the children to find their stockings full in the morning. In the darkness and the blizzard she lost her way. She was found by a search party on Christmas morning, frozen to death,

face down in a snowdrift, with the presents for the children clutched in her hand. A sophisticated person might say "Serve her right!" or find the story somehow sentimental, but locally it has become a kind of legend, and the dead woman, her maternal instinct thwarted by circumstances over which she had no control, a kind of saint or martyr. I had heard two or three versions of the story when I went one Sunday to an "anniversary" at a local chapel. (These anniversaries, half sacred and half secular, are simply eisteddfods on a small scale.) A dear old man got up and recited, with feeling, a ballad of his own composing about the young mother lost in the snow. It was listened to with rapt attention and deeply admired. A real folk-poem, it was in its way a work of art, and therefore timeless; in one's mind it set up the figure of the homegoing woman like an equestrian statue, perpetuated a Christmas Eve and prevented its snow from ever melting.

When I praised the beauty of the countryside, whether under snow or lavish with summer, to an old labourer in a lane he said I mightn't think it so beautiful if I had to get a living out of it. This I readily admitted, but when he began to talk he talked like a poet, by which I mean that he gave utterance to sensuous impressions, emotions, memories and opinions in clear and memorable phrases that could only have been evolved by a person with a heart and a head and a special matured-in-the-wood wisdom of his own. I don't want to generalise about the Welsh character, but many people in this parish did seem to me to have what may be loosely called poetic feeling. The toilworn farmer pointing out the features of the landscape or recalling the past; the woman singing "God be with you till we meet again" over the washtub; the girl fetching a bottle of perry across the hayfields; the roadmenders stopping work to look up at that rare sight, an aeroplane; the two miners holidaying in a minute tent pitched in the bracken; the naked boy cleaning out the bathing pool; the voluble blacksmith; the eccentric recluse with his books and curiosities and half-ruined house (I must write of him

another time)—all these people seemed to have the faculty of turning fact into legend, of living a legend: they seemed almost to be conscious of being characters in an endless epic—in which Kilvert and the murderer and the frozen woman also have their places. You can't live on a heath and be vulgar, said Hardy. It seems that to live on this heath makes people see things in their true colours and gives them a power of speech. They help one to understand why Wales has a literature of its own, a living language, tendencies that make up a character, a rhythm, a pattern, a vibration, variable but persistent and timeless.

The unpopulous landscape, which emigrants spurred by enterprise and economic pressure have long been deserting for distant countries and other servitudes, retains its richness and wildness. Here I sit, sweating from a long walk, on a bank of heather in the afternoon sun, listening to the tiny artillery of the seed-pods of the gorse bursting open in the heat, bursting with life. Between me and the climbing flowery hills lies the Rhos Goch, a sinister bog where many have been drowned; over there is Llanshiver with its dark past, and Cefn-y-Blaen, where giants once lived; and there is the road to Newchurch-on-Arrow, up which Kilvert, bearded and repressed and dressed in black, used to stride to see his sweet but *maladive* Emmeline. The more you know, the more it all fits together. All is of a piece. It is all a play in which we are all acting. The unities are observed. There are only thirty-six possible situations, though they are capable of being infinitely varied. Time is no object, for nobody knows when the play began or when it will end. Whitehall is in ruins again, and in another Whitehall they have prepared another war against the Germans.

JOHN BETJEMAN
BLACKFRIARS

By the shot tower
 near the chimneys
Off the road to
 Waterloo
Stands the cottage
 of 'The Ancient'
As in eighteen-
 forty two.
Over brickwork,
 brownish brickwork
Lilac hangs in
 London sun
And by light fan-
 tastic clockwork
Moves the drawbridge
 sounds the gun.
When the sunset
 in the side streets
Brought the breezes
 up the tide
Floated bits of
 daily journals
Stable smells and
 silverside.
And the gaslight
 yellow gaslight
Flaring in its
 wiry cage,
Like the Prison
 Scene in *Norval*
On the old Ol-
 ympic stage,

Lit the archway
as the thunder
And the rumble
and the roll
Heralded a
little handcart
And 'The Ancient'
selling coal.

NORMAN CAMERON
THE WANTON'S
DEATH

She, wild with wantonness, to her two suitors,
A merman and a landman, gave this challenge:
"To prove his love the sturdier, each abandon
"The element in which his suit was fostered
"And undergo this test of transmutation,
"Merman ashore, landman beyond the breakers."
The two obeyed, in fear and pride and passion.
One gasped and writhed, the other choked and floundered;
She, to both quarters native, round them sporting.
At length each suitor found a specious refuge,
Merman a pool, landman a reefy foothold,
Both claiming still the guerdon of achievement.
And, when she mocked their lie, each vowed in anger
His new-adapted element more kindly
Than the fair promiser who brought him thither. . . .
Her relics rot on the sea-wasted foreshore,
Half-wooded, half-spurned by the land-tainted spindrift.

GEORGE ORWELL

BOYS' WEEKLIES

You never walk far through any poor quarter in any big town without coming upon a small newsagent's shop. The general appearance of these shops is always very much the same. A few posters for the *Daily Mail* and the *News of the World* outside, a poky little window with sweet bottles and packets of Players, and a dark interior smelling of Liquorice Allsorts and festooned from floor to ceiling with vilely-printed twopenny papers, most of them with lurid cover-illustrations in three colours.

Except for the daily and evening papers the stock of these shops hardly overlaps at all with that of the big newsagents. Their main selling line is the twopenny weekly, and the number and variety of these are almost unbelievable. Every hobby and pastime—cage-birds, fretwork, carpentering, bees, carrier pigeons, home conjuring, philately, chess—has at least one paper devoted to it, and generally several. Gardening and livestock-keeping must have at least a score between them. Then there are the sporting papers, the radio papers, the children's comics, the various snippet papers such as *Tit-Bits*, the large range of papers devoted to the movies and all more or less exploiting women's legs, the various trade papers, the women's story-papers (the *Oracle*, *Secrets*, *Peg's Paper*, etc., etc.), the needlework papers—these so numerous that a display of them alone will often fill an entire window—and in addition the long series of "Yank Mags" (*Fight Stories*, *Action Stories*, *Western Short Stories*, etc.), which are imported shopsoiled from America and sold at twopence halfpenny or threepence. And the periodical proper shades off into the fourpenny novelette, the *Aldine Boxing Novels*, the *Boys' Friend Library*, the *Schoolgirls' Own Library*, and many others.

Probably the contents of these shops is the best available

indication of what the mass of the English people really feels and thinks. Certainly nothing half so revealing exists in documentary form. Best-seller novels, for instance, tell one a great deal, but the novel is aimed almost exclusively at people above the £4 a week level. The movies are probably a very unsafe guide to popular taste, because the film industry is virtually a monopoly, which means that it is not obliged to study its public at all closely. The same applies to some extent to the daily papers, and most of all to the radio. But it does not apply to the weekly paper with a smallish circulation and specialised subject-matter. Papers like the *Exchange and Mart*, for instance, or *Cage Birds*, or the *Oracle*, or *Prediction*, or the *Matrimonial Times*, only exist because there is a definite demand for them, and they reflect the minds of their readers as a great national daily with a circulation of millions cannot possibly do.

Here I am only dealing with a single series of papers, the boys' twopenny weeklies, often inaccurately described as "penny dreadfuls". Falling strictly within this class there are at present ten papers, the *Gem*, *Magnet*, *Modern Boy*, *Triumph* and *Champion*, all owned by the Amalgamated Press, and the *Wizard*, *Rover*, *Skipper*, *Hotspur* and *Adventure*, all owned by D. C. Thomson and Co. What the circulation of these papers are I do not know. The editors and proprietors refuse to name any figures, and in any case the circulation of a paper carrying serial stories is bound to fluctuate widely. But there is no question that the combined public of the ten papers is a very large one. They are on sale in every town in England, and nearly every boy who reads at all goes through a phase of reading one or more of them. The *Gem* and *Magnet*, which are much the oldest of these papers, are of rather different type from the rest, and they have evidently lost some of their popularity during the past few years. A good many boys now regard them as old-fashioned and "slow". Nevertheless I want to discuss them first, because they are more interesting psychologically than the others, and also because the mere survival of such papers into the nineteen-forties

is a startling phenomenon.

The *Gem* and *Magnet* are sister-papers (characters out of one paper frequently appear in the other) and were both started more than thirty years ago. At that time, together with *Chums* and the old *B.O.P.*, they were the leading papers for boys, and they remained dominant till quite recently. Each of them carries every week a fifteen- or twenty-thousand word school-story, complete in itself but usually more or less connected with the story of the week before. The *Gem* in addition to its school-story carries one or more adventure-serials. Otherwise the two papers are so much alike that they can be treated as one, though the *Magnet* has always been the better-known of the two, probably because it possesses a really first-rate character in the fat boy, Billy Bunter.

The stories are stories of what purports to be public-school life, and the schools (Greyfriars in the *Magnet* and St. Jim's in the *Gem*) are represented as ancient and fashionable foundations of the type of Eton or Winchester. All the leading characters are fourth-form boys aged fourteen or fifteen, older or younger boys only appearing in very minor parts. Like Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee these boys continue week after week and year after year, never growing any older. Very occasionally a new boy arrives or a minor character drops out, but in at any rate the last twenty-five years the personnel has barely altered. All the principal characters in both papers, Bob Cherry, Tom Merry, Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Billy Bunter and the rest of them were at Greyfriars or St. Jim's long before the Great War, exactly the same age as at present, having much the same kind of adventures and talking almost exactly the same dialect. And not only the characters but the whole atmosphere of both *Gem* and *Magnet* has been preserved unchanged, partly by means of very elaborate stylization. The stories in the *Magnet* are signed "Frank Richards" and those in the *Gem* "Martin Clifford", but it is difficult to believe that a series running for thirty years could actually be written by the same person every week.

Consequently they have to be written in a style that is easily imitated—an extraordinary, artificial, repetitive style, quite different from anything else now existing in English literature. A couple of extracts will do as illustrations. Here is one from the *Magnet*:

“Groan!

“‘Shut up, Bunter!’

“Groan!

“Shutting up was not really in Billy Bunter’s line. He seldom shut up, though often requested to do so. On the present awful occasion the fat Owl of the Remove was less inclined than ever to shut up. And he did not shut up! He groaned, and groaned, and went on groaning.

“Even groaning did not fully express Bunter’s feelings. His feelings, in fact, were inexpressible.

“There were six of them in the soup! Only one of the six uttered sounds of woe and lamentation. But that one, William George Bunter, uttered enough for the whole party and a little over.

“Harry Wharton & Co. stood in a wrathful and worried group. They were landed and stranded, diddled, dished and done!” etc., etc., etc.

Here is one from the *Gem*:

“‘Oh cwumbs!’

“‘Oh gum!’

“‘Oooogh!’

“‘Urrggh!’

“Arthur Augustus sat up dizzily. He grabbed his handkerchief and pressed it to his damaged nose. Tom Merry sat up, gasping for breath. They looked at one another.

“‘Bai Jove! This is a go, deah boy!’ gurgled Arthur Augustus. ‘I have been thwown into quite a fluttah! Oogh! The wottahs! The wuffians! The feahful outsiders! Wow!’” etc., etc., etc.

Both of these extracts are entirely typical; you would find something like them in almost every chapter of every number, today or twenty-five years ago. The first thing that anyone would notice is the extraordinary amount of

tautology (the first of these two passages contains a hundred and twenty-five words and could be compressed into about thirty), seemingly designed to spin out the story but actually playing its part in creating the atmosphere. For the same reason various facetious expressions are repeated over and over again; "wrathy", for instance, is a great favourite, and so is "diddled, dished and done". "Oooogh!", "Grooo!" and "Yaroo!" (stylized cries of pain) recur constantly, and so does "Ha! Ha! Ha!", always given a line to itself, so that sometimes a quarter of a column or thereabouts consists of "Ha! Ha! Ha!" The slang ("Go and eat coke!", "What the thump!", "You frabjous ass!" etc., etc.) has never been altered, so that the boys are now using slang which is at least thirty years out of date. In addition the various nicknames are rubbed in on every possible occasion. At every few lines we are reminded that Harry Wharton & Co. are "the Famous Five", Bunter is always "the fat Owl" or "the Owl of the Remove", Vernon-Smith is always "the Bounder of Greyfriars", Gussy (the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy) is always "the swell of St. Jim's", and so on and so forth. There is a constant, untiring effort to keep the atmosphere intact and to make sure that every new reader learns immediately who is who. The result has been to make Greyfriars and St. Jim's into an extraordinary little world of their own, a world which cannot be taken seriously by anyone over fifteen but which at any rate is not easily forgotten. By a debasement of the Dickens technique a series of stereotyped "characters" has been built up, in several cases very successfully. Billy Bunter, for instance, must be one of the best-known characters in English fiction; for the mere number of people who know him he ranks with Sexton Blake, Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes and a handful of characters in Dickens.

Needless to say these stories are fantastically unlike life at a real public school. They run in cycles of rather differing types, but in general they are the clean-fun, knock-about type of story, with interest centering round horseplay,

practical jokes, ragging masters, fights, canings, cricket, football and food. A constantly recurring story is one in which a boy is accused of some misdeed committed by another and is too much of a sportsman to reveal the truth. The "good" boys are "good" in the clean-living Englishman tradition—they keep in hard training, wash behind their ears, never hit below the belt, etc., etc.—and by way of contrast there is a series of "bad" boys, Racke, Crooke, Loder and others, whose badness consists in betting, smoking cigarettes and frequenting public houses. All these boys are constantly on the verge of expulsion, but as it would mean a change of personnel if any boy were actually expelled, no one is ever caught out in any really serious offence. Stealing, for instance, barely enters as a motif. Sex is completely tabu, especially in the form in which it actually arises at public schools. Occasionally girls enter into the stories, and very rarely there is something approaching a mild flirtation, but it is always entirely in the spirit of clean fun. A boy and girl enjoy going for bicycle rides together—that is all it ever amounts to. Kissing, for instance, would be regarded as "soppy". Even the bad boys are presumed to be completely sexless. When the *Gem* and *Magnet* were started it is probable that there was a deliberate intention to get away from the guilty sex-ridden atmosphere that pervaded so much of the earlier literature for boys. In the 'nineties the *Boys' Own Paper*, for instance, used to have its correspondence columns full of terrifying warnings against masturbation, and books like *St. Winifred's* and *Tom Brown's Schooldays* are heavy with homosexual feeling, though no doubt the authors were not fully aware of it. In the *Gem* and *Magnet* sex simply does not exist as a problem. Religion is also tabu; in the whole thirty years' issue of the two papers the word "God" probably does not occur, except in "God save the King". On the other hand there has always been a very strong "temperance" strain. Drinking and, by association, smoking are regarded as rather disgraceful even in an adult ("shady" is the usual word), but at the same time as something irresistibly

fascinating, a sort of substitute for sex. In their moral atmosphere the *Gem* and *Magnet* have a great deal in common with the Boy Scout movement, which started at about the same time.

All literature of this kind is partly plagiarism. Sexton Blake, for instance, started off quite frankly as an imitation of Sherlock Holmes and still resembles him fairly strongly; he has hawklike features, lives in Baker Street, smokes enormously and puts on a dressing-gown when he wants to think. The *Gem* and *Magnet* probably owe something to the school-story writers who were flourishing when they began, Gunby Hadath, Desmond Coke and the rest, but they owe more to nineteenth-century models. In so far as Greyfriars and St. Jim's are like real schools at all, they are much more like Tom Brown's Rugby than a modern public school. Neither school has an O.T.C., for instance, games are not compulsory, and the boys are even allowed to wear what clothes they like. But without doubt the main origin of these books is *Stalky & Co.* This book has had an immense influence on boys' literature and it is one of those books which have a sort of traditional reputation among people who have never even seen a copy of it. More than once in boys' weekly papers I have come across a reference to *Stalky & Co.* in which the word was spelt "Storky". Even the name of the chief comic among the Greyfriars masters, Mr. Prout, is taken from *Stalky & Co.*, and so is much of the slang: "jape", "merry", "giddy", "bizney" (business), "frabjous", "don't" for "doesn't"—all of them out of date even when the *Gem* and *Magnet* started. There are also traces of earlier origins. The name Greyfriars is probably taken from Thackeray, and Gosling, the school porter in the *Magnet*, talks in an imitation of Dickens dialect.

With all this, the supposed "glamour" of public-school life is played for all it is worth. There is all the usual paraphernalia—lock-up, roll-call, house-matches, fagging, prefects, cosy teas round the study fire, etc., etc.—and constant references to the "old school", the "old grey

stones" (both schools were founded in the early sixteenth century), the "team spirit" of the "Greyfriars men". As for the snob-appeal, it is completely shameless. Each school has a titled boy or two whose titles are constantly thrust in the reader's face; other boys have the names of well-known aristocratic families, Talbot, Manners, Lowther. We are forever being reminded that Gussy is the Honourable Arthur A. D'Arcy, son of Lord Eastwood, that Jack Blake is heir to "broad acres", that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh (nicknamed Inky) is the Nabob of Bhanipur, that Vernon-Smith's father is a millionaire. Till recently the illustrations in both papers always depicted the boys in clothes imitated from those of Eton; in the last few years Greyfriars has changed over to blazers and flannel trousers, but St. Jim's still sticks to the Eton jacket and Gussy sticks to his top hat. In the school magazine which appears every week as part of the *Magnet* Harry Wharton writes an article discussing the pocket-money received by the "fellows in the Remove", and reveals that some of them get as much as five pounds a week! This kind of thing is a perfectly deliberate incitement to wealth-fantasy. And here it is worth noticing a rather curious fact, and that is that the school-story is a thing peculiar to England. So far as I know there are extremely few school-stories in foreign languages. The reason, obviously, is that in England education is mainly a matter of status. The most definite dividing-line between the petite bourgeoisie and the working class is that the former pay for their education, and within the bourgeoisie there is another unbridgable gulf between the "public" school and the "private" school. It is quite clear that there are tens and scores of thousands of people to whom every detail of life at a "posh" public school is wildly thrilling and romantic. They happen to be outside that mystic world of quadrangles and house-colours, but they yearn after it, day-dream about it, live mentally in it for hours at a stretch. The question is, who are these people? Who reads the *Gem* and *Magnet*?

Obviously one can never be quite certain about this kind

of thing. All I can say from my own observation is this. Boys who are likely to go to public schools themselves generally read the *Gem* and *Magnet*, but they nearly always stop reading them when they are about twelve; they may continue for another year from force of habit, but by that time they have ceased to take them seriously. On the other hand, the boys at very cheap private schools, the schools that are designed for people who can't afford a public school but consider the Council schools "common", continue reading the *Gem* and *Magnet* for several years longer. A few years ago I was a teacher at two of these schools myself. I found that not only did virtually all the boys read the *Gem* and *Magnet*, but that they were still taking them fairly seriously when they were fifteen or even sixteen. These boys were the sons of shopkeepers, office employees and small business and professional men, and obviously it is this class that the *Gem* and *Magnet* are aimed at. But they are certainly read by working-class boys as well. They are generally on sale in the poorest quarters of big towns, and I have known them to be read by boys whom one might expect to be completely immune from public-school "glamour". I have seen a young coal-miner, for instance, a lad who had already worked a year or two underground, eagerly reading the *Gem*. Recently I offered a batch of English papers to some British legionaries of the French Foreign Legion in North Africa; they picked out the *Gem* and *Magnet* first. Both papers are much read by girls,* and the Pen Pals department of the *Gem* shows that it is read in every corner of the British Empire, by Australians, Canadians, Palestine Jews, Malays, Arabs, Straits Chinese etc., etc. The editors evidently expect their readers to be aged round about fourteen, and the advertisements (milk chocolate, postage stamps, water pistols, blushing cured, home conjuring tricks, itching

*There are several corresponding girls' papers. The *Schoolgirl* is companion-paper to the *Magnet* and has stories by "Hilda Richards." The characters are interchangeable to some extent. Bessie Bunter, Billy Bunter's sister, figures in the *Schoolgirl*.

powder, the Phine Phun Ring which runs a needle into your friend's hand, etc., etc.) indicate roughly the same age; there are also the Admiralty advertisements, however, which call for youths between seventeen and twenty-two. And there is no question that these papers are also read by adults. It is quite common for people to write to the editor and say that they have read every number of the *Gem* or *Magnet* for the past thirty years. Here for instance is a letter from a lady in Salisbury:

"I can say of your splendid yarns of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, that they never fail to reach a high standard. Without doubt they are the finest stories of their type on the market today, which is saying a good deal. They seem to bring you face to face with Nature. I have taken the *Magnet* from the start, and have followed the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. with rapt interest. I have no sons, but two daughters, and there's always a rush to be the first to read the grand old paper. My husband, too, was a staunch reader of the *Magnet* until he was suddenly taken away from us."

It is well worth getting hold of some copies of the *Gem* and *Magnet*, especially the *Gem*, simply to have a look at the correspondence columns. What is truly startling is the intense interest with which the pettiest details of life at Greyfriars and St. Jim's are followed up. Here for instance are a few of the questions sent in by readers:

"What age is Dick Roylance?" "How old is St. Jim's?" "Can you give me a list of the Shell and their studies?" "How much did D'Arcy's monocle cost?" "How is it fellows like Crooke are in the Shell and decent fellows like yourself are only in the Fourth?" "What are the Form captain's three chief duties?" "Who is the chemistry master at St. Jim's?" (From a girl) "Where is St. Jim's situated? *Could* you tell me how to get there, as I would love to see the building? Are you boys just 'phoneys', as I think you are?"

It is clear that many of the boys and girls who write these letters are living a complete fantasy-life. Sometimes

a boy will write, for instance, giving his age, height, weight, chest and bicep measurement and asking which member of the Shell or Fourth Form he most exactly resembles. The demand for a list of the studies on the Shell passage, with an exact account of who lives in each, is a very common one. The editors, of course, do everything in their power to keep up the illusion. In the *Gem* Jack Blake is supposed to write the answers to correspondents, and in the *Magnet* a couple of pages is always given up to the school magazine (the *Greyfriars Herald*, edited by Harry Wharton), and there is another page in which one or other character is written up each week. The stories run in cycles, two or three characters being kept in the foreground for several weeks at a time. First there will be a series of rollicking adventure stories, featuring the Famous Five and Billy Bunter; then a run of stories turning on mistaken identity, with Wibley (the make-up wizard) in the star part; then a run of more serious stories in which Vernon-Smith is trembling on the verge of expulsion. And here one comes upon the real secret of the *Gem* and *Magnet* and the probable reason why they continue to be read in spite of their obvious out-of-dateness.

It is that the characters are so carefully graded as to give almost every type of reader a character he can identify himself with. Most boys' papers aim at doing this, hence the boy-assistant (Sexton Blake's Tinker, Nelson Lee's Nipper, etc.) who usually accompanies the explorer, detective or what-not on his adventures. But in these cases there is only one boy, and usually it is much the same type of boy. In the *Gem* and *Magnet* there is a model for very nearly everybody. There is the normal, athletic, high-spirited boy (Tom Merry, Jack Blake, Frank Nugent), a slightly rowdier version of this type (Bob Cherry), a more aristocratic version (Talbot, Manners), a quieter, more serious version (Harry Wharton), and a stolid, "bulldog" version (Johnny Bull). Then there is the reckless, dare-devil type of boy (Vernon-Smith), the definitely "clever", studious boy (Mark Linley, Dick Penfold), and the eccentric

boy who is not good at games but possesses some special talent (Skinner, Wibley). And there is the scholarship-boy (Tom Redwing), an important figure in this class of story because he makes it possible for boys from very poor homes to project themselves into the public-school atmosphere. In addition there are Australian, Irish, Welsh, Manx, Yorkshire and Lancashire boys to play upon local patriotism. But the subtlety of characterisation goes deeper than this. If one studies the correspondence columns one sees that there is probably *no* character in the *Gem* and *Magnet* whom some or other reader does not identify with, except the out-and-out comics, Coker, Billy Bunter, Fisher T. Fish (the money-grubbing American boy), and, of course, the masters. Bunter, though in his origin he probably owed something to the fat boy in *Pickwick*, is a real creation. His tight trousers against which boots and canes are constantly thudding, his astuteness in search of food, his postal order which never turns up, have made him famous wherever the Union Jack waves. But he is not a subject for day-dreams. On the other hand another seeming figure of fun, Gussy (the Honourable Arthur A. D'Arcy, "the swell of St. Jim's"), is evidently much admired. Like everything else in the *Gem* and *Magnet* Gussy is at least thirty years out of date. He is the "knut" of the early twentieth century or even the "masher" of the 'nineties ("Bai Jove, deah boy!" and "Weally, I shall be obliged to give you a feahful thwashin'!"), the monocled idiot who made good on the fields of Mons and Le Cateau. And his evident popularity goes to show how deep the snob-appeal of this type is. English people are extremely fond of the titled ass (cf. Lord Peter Wimsey) who always turns up trumps in the moment of emergency. Here is a letter from one of Gussy's girl admirers:

"I think you're too hard on Gussy. I wonder he's still in existence, the way you treat him. He's my hero."

In the *Gem* there is also a heroic fat boy, Fatty Wynn, as a set-off against Bunter. Vernon-Smith, "the Bounder of the Remove", a Byronic character, always on the verge

of the sack, is another great favourite. And even some of the cads probably have their following. Loder, for instance, "the rotter of the Sixth", is a cad, but he is also a high-brow and given to saying sarcastic things about football and the team spirit. The boys of the Remove only think him all the more of a cad for this, but a certain type of boy would probably identify himself with him. Even Racke, Crooke and Co. are probably admired by small boys who think it diabolically wicked to smoke cigarettes. (A frequent question in the correspondence column: "What brand of cigarettes does Racke smoke?").

Naturally the politics of the *Gem* and *Magnet* are Conservative, but in a completely pre-1914 style, with no Fascist tinge. In reality their basic political assumptions are two: nothing ever changes, and foreigners are funny. In the *Gem* of 1939 Frenchmen are still Froggies and Italians are still Dagoes. Mossoo, the French master at Greyfriars, is the usual comic-paper Frog, with pointed beard, pegtop trousers, etc. Inky, the Indian boy, though a rajah and therefore possessing snob-appeal, is also the comic babu of the *Punch* tradition. ("The rowfulness is not the proper caper, my esteemed Bob", said Inky. 'Let dogs delight in the barkfulness and bitefulness, but the soft answer is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to a bird in the bush, as the English proverb remarks'.) Fisher T. Fish is the old-style stage Yankee ("Waal, I guess", etc.), dating from a period of Anglo-American jealousy. Wun Lung, the Chinese boy (he has rather faded out of late, no doubt because some of the *Magnet's* readers are Straits Chinese) is the nineteenth-century pantomime Chinaman, with saucer-shaped hat, pigtail and pidgin English. The assumption all along is not only that foreigners are comics who are put there for us to laugh at, but that they can be classified in much the same way as insects. That is why in all boys' papers, not only the *Gem* and *Magnet*, a Chinaman is invariably portrayed with a pigtail. It is the thing you recognize him by, like the Frenchman's beard or the Italian's barrel-organ. In papers of this kind it occasionally happens

that when the setting of a story is in a foreign country some attempt is made to describe the natives as individual human beings, but as a rule it is assumed that foreigners of any one race are all alike and will conform more or less exactly to pattern.

The working classes only enter into the *Gem* and *Magnet* as comics or semi-villains (race-course touts etc.). As for class-friction, trade-unionism, strikes, slumps, unemployment, Fascism and civil war—not a mention. Somewhere or other in the thirty years' issue of the two papers you might perhaps find the word "Socialism", but you would have to look a long time for it. If the Russian Revolution is anywhere referred to it will be indirectly, in the word "Bolshy" (meaning a person of violent disagreeable habits). Hitler and the Nazis are just beginning to make their appearance. The war-crisis of September, 1938, made just enough impression to produce a story in which Mr. Vernon-Smith, the Bounder's millionaire father, cashed in on the general panic by buying up country houses in order to sell them to "crisis scuttlers". But that is probably as near to noticing the European situation as the *Gem* and *Magnet* will come, until the war actually starts.* That does not mean these papers are unpatriotic—quite the contrary! Throughout the Great War the *Gem* and *Magnet* were perhaps the most consistently and cheerfully patriotic papers in England. Almost every week the boys caught a spy or pushed a conchy into the army, and during the rationing period EAT LESS BREAD was printed in large type on every page. But their patriotism has nothing whatever to do with power-politics or "ideological" warfare. It is more akin to family loyalty, and actually it gives one a valuable clue to the attitude of ordinary people, especially the huge untouched block of the middle class and the better-off working class. These people are patriotic to the middle of their bones, but they do not feel that what happens in

*This was written some months before the outbreak of war. Up to the end of September, 1939, no mention of the war has appeared in either paper.

foreign countries is any of their business. When England is in danger they rally to its defence as a matter of course, but in between-times they are not interested. After all, England is always in the right and England always wins, so why worry? It is an attitude that has been shaken during the past twenty years, but not so deeply as is sometimes supposed. Failure to understand it is one of the reasons why leftwing political parties are seldom able to produce an acceptable foreign policy.

The mental world of the *Gem* and *Magnet*, therefore, is something like this:—

The year is 1910—or 1940, but it is all the same. You are at Greyfriars, a rosy-cheeked boy of fourteen in posh tailor-made clothes, sitting down to tea in your study on the Remove passage after an exciting game of football which was won by an odd goal in the last half minute. There is a cosy fire in the study, and outside the wind is whistling. The ivy clusters thickly round the old grey stones. The King is on his throne and the pound is worth a pound. Over in Europe the comic foreigners are jabbering and gesticulating, but the grim grey battleships of the British fleet are steaming up the Channel and at the outposts of Empire the monocled Englishmen are holding the niggers at bay. Lord Mauleverer has just got another fiver and we are all settling down to a tremendous tea of sausages, sardines, crumpets, potted meat, jam and doughnuts. After tea we shall sit round the study fire having a good laugh at Billy Bunter and discussing the team for next week's match against Rookwood. Everything is safe, solid and unquestionable. Everything will be the same for ever and ever. That approximately is the atmosphere.

But now turn from the *Gem* and *Magnet* to the more up-to-date papers which have appeared since the Great War. The truly significant thing is that they have more points of resemblance to the *Gem* and *Magnet* than points of difference. But it is better to consider the points of difference first.

There are eight of these newer papers, the *Modern Boy*,

Triumph, *Champion*, *Wizard*, *Rover*, *Skipper*, *Hotspur* and *Adventure*. All of these have appeared since the Great War, but except for the *Modern Boy* none of them is less than five years old. Two papers which ought also to be mentioned briefly here, though they are not strictly in the same class as the rest, are the *Detective Weekly* and the *Thriller*, both owned by the Amalgamated Press. The *Detective Weekly* has taken over Sexton Blake. Both of these papers admit a certain amount of sex-interest into their stories, and though certainly read by boys they are not aimed at them exclusively. All the others are boys' papers pure and simple, and they are sufficiently alike to be considered together. There does not seem to be any notable difference between Thomson's publications and those of the Amalgamated Press.

As soon as one looks at these papers one sees their technical superiority to the *Gem* and *Magnet*. To begin with they have the great advantage of not being written entirely by one person. Instead of one long complete story a number of the *Wizard* or *Hotspur* consists of half a dozen or more serials, none of which goes on for ever. Consequently there is far more variety and far less padding, and none of the tiresome stylization and facetiousness of the *Gem* and *Magnet*. Look at this extract, for example:

"After a terrible climb, hacking out hand-holds in the smooth ice every step of the way up, Sergeant Lionheart Logan of the Mounties was now clinging like a human fly to the face of an icy cliff, as smooth and treacherous as a giant pane of glass.

"An Arctic blizzard, in all its fury, was buffeting his body, driving the blinding snow into his face, seeking to tear his fingers loose from their handholds and dash him to death on the jagged boulders which lay at the foot of the cliff a hundred feet below.

"Crouching among those boulders were eleven villainous trappers who had done their best to shoot down Lionheart and his companion, Constable Jim Rogers—until the blizzard had blotted the two Mounties out of sight from

below."

(The *Wizard*.)

The extract gets you some distance with the story. Moreover, by not concentrating solely on school-stories (in point of number the school-story slightly predominates in all these papers, except the *Thriller* and *Detective Weekly*), the *Wizard*, *Hotspur* etc. have far greater opportunities for sensationalism. Merely looking at the cover-illustrations of the papers which I have on the table in front of me, here are some of the things I see. On one a cowboy is clinging by his toes to the wing of an aeroplane in mid-air and shooting down another aeroplane with his revolver. On another a Chinaman is swimming for his life down a sewer with a swarm of ravenous-looking rats swimming after him. On another an engineer is lighting a stick of dynamite while a steel robot feels for him with its claws. On another a man in airman's costume is fighting barehanded against a rat somewhat larger than a donkey. On another a nearly naked man of terrific muscular development has just seized a lion by the tail and flung it thirty yards over the wall of an arena, with the words "Take back your blooming lion!" Clearly no school-story can compete with this kind of thing. From time to time the school buildings may catch fire or the French master may turn out to be the head of an international anarchist gang, but in a general way the interest must centre round cricket, school rivalries, practical jokes, etc. There is not much room for bombs, death-rays, sub-machine guns, aeroplanes, mustangs, octopuses, grizzly bears or gangsters.

Examination of a large number of these papers shows that, putting aside school-stories, the favourite subjects are Wild West, Frozen North, Foreign Legion, crime (always from the detective's angle), the Great War (Air Force or Secret Service, not the infantry), the Tarzan motif in varying forms, professional football, tropical exploration, historical romance (Robin Hood, Cavaliers and Round-heads, etc.) and scientific invention. The Wild West still leads, at any rate as a setting, though the Red Indian seems to be fading out. The one theme that is really new is the

scientific one. Death-rays, Martians, invisible men, robots, helicopters and interplanetary rockets figure largely; here and there there are even far-off rumours of psychotherapy and ductless glands. Whereas the *Gem* and *Magnet* derive from Dickens and Kipling, the *Wizard*, *Champion*, *Modern Boy* etc. owe a great deal to H. G. Wells, who, rather than Jules Verne, is the father of "scientifiction". Naturally it is the magical, Martian aspect of science that is most exploited, but one or two papers include serious articles on scientific subjects, besides quantities of informative snippets. There is a marked advance in intellectual curiosity and, on the whole, in the demand made on the reader's attention. In practice the *Gem* and *Magnet* and the post-war papers are read by much the same public, but the mental age aimed at seems to have risen by a year or two years—an improvement probably corresponding to the improvement in elementary education since 1909.

The other thing that has emerged in the post-war boys' papers, though not to anything like the extent one would expect, is bully-worship and the cult of violence.

If one compares the *Gem* and *Magnet* with a genuinely modern paper, the thing that immediately strikes one is the absence of the leader-principle. There is no central dominating character; instead there are fifteen or twenty characters, all more or less on an equality, with whom readers of different types can identify themselves. In the more modern papers this is not usually the case. Instead of identifying himself with a schoolboy of more or less his own age, the reader of the *Skipper*, *Hotspur* etc. is led to identify with a G-man, with a Foreign Legionary, with some variant of Tarzan, with an air ace, a master spy, an explorer, a pugilist—at any rate with some single all-powerful character who dominates everyone about him and whose usual method of solving any problem is a sock on the jaw. This character is intended as a superman, and as physical strength is the form of power that boys can best understand, he is usually a sort of human gorilla; in the Tarzan type of story he is sometimes actually a giant, eight

or ten feet high. At the same time the scenes of violence in nearly all these stories are remarkably harmless and unconvincing. There is a great difference in tone between even the most bloodthirsty English paper and the three-penny Yank Mags, *Fight Stories*, *Action Stories* etc. (not strictly boys' papers but largely read by boys). In the Yank Mags you get real blood-lust, really gory descriptions of the all-in, jump-on-his-testicles style of fighting, written in a jargon that has been perfected by people who brood endlessly upon violence. A paper like *Fight Stories*, for instance, would have very little appeal except to sadists or masochists. You can see the comparative gentleness of the English civilization by the amateurish way in which prizefighting is always described in the boys' weeklies. There is no specialised vocabulary. Look at these two extracts, one English, one American:

"When the gong sounded, both men were breathing heavily, and each had great red marks on his chest. Bill's chin was bleeding, and Ben had a cut over his right eye."

"Into their corners they sank, but when the gong clanged again they were up swiftly, and they went like tigers at each other."

(*The Rover*.)

"He walked in stolidly and smashed a clublike right to my face. Blood spattered and I went back on my heels, but surged in and ripped my right under the heart. Another right smashed full on Sven's already battered mouth, and spitting out the fragments of a tooth, he crashed a flailing left to my body."

(*Fight Stories*.)

Notice how much more knowledgeable the American extract sounds. They are written for devotees of the prize ring, the others are not. Also, it ought to be emphasised that on its level the moral code of the English boys' papers is a decent one. Crime and dishonesty are never held up to admiration, there is none of the cynicism and corruption of the American gangster-story. The huge sale of the Yank Mags in England shows that there is a demand for that kind of thing, but very few English writers seem able to produce it. When hatred of Hitler became a major emotion

in America, it was interesting to see how promptly "anti-fascism" was adapted to pornographic purposes by the editors of the Yank Mags. One magazine which I have in front of me is given up to a long complete story, *When Hell came to America*, in which the agents of a "blood-maddened European dictator" are trying to conquer the U.S.A. with death-rays and invisible aeroplanes. There is the frankest appeal to sadism, scenes in which Nazis tie bombs to women's backs and fling them off heights to watch them blown to pieces in mid-air, others in which they tie naked girls together by their hair and prod them with knives to make them dance, etc., etc. The editor comments solemnly on all this and uses it as a plea for tightening up restrictions against immigrants. On another page of the same paper: "LIVES OF THE HOTCHA CHORUS GIRLS. Reveals all the intimate secrets and fascinating pastimes of the famous Broadway Hotcha girls. NOTHING IS OMITTED. Price 10c." "HOW TO LOVE 10c." "FRENCH PHOTO RING 25c." "NAUGHTY NUDIES TRANSFERS. From the outside of the glass you see a beautiful girl, innocently dressed. Turn it around and look through the glass and oh! what a difference. Set of 3 transfers 25c.", etc., etc., etc. There is nothing at all like this in any English paper likely to be read by boys. But the process of Americanisation is going on all the same. The American ideal, the "he-man", the "tough guy", the gorilla who puts everything right by socking everybody else on the jaw, now figures in probably a majority of boys' papers. In one serial now running in the *Skipper* he is always portrayed, ominously enough, swinging a rubber truncheon.

The development of the *Wizard*, *Hotspur*, etc., as against the earlier boys' papers, boils down to this: better technique, more scientific interest, more bloodshed, more leadership. But after all it is the *lack* of development that is the really striking thing.

To begin with there is no political development whatever. The world of the *Skipper* and the *Champion* is still the pre-1914 world of the *Magnet* and the *Gem*. The Wild

West story, for instance, with its cattle-rustlers, lynch-law and other paraphernalia belonging to the 'eighties, is a curiously archaic thing. It is worth noticing that in papers of this type it is always taken for granted that adventures only happen at the ends of the earth, in tropical forests, in Arctic wastes, in African deserts, on western prairies, in Chinese opium dens—everywhere, in fact, except the places where things really *do* happen. That is a belief dating from thirty or forty years ago, when the new continents were in process of being opened up. Nowadays, of course, if you really want adventure the place to look for it is in Europe. But apart from the picturesque side of the Great War, contemporary history is carefully excluded. And except that Americans are now admired instead of being laughed at, foreigners are exactly the same figures of fun that they always were. If a Chinese character appears he is still the sinister pigtailed opium-smuggler of Sax Rohmer. If a Spaniard appears he is still a "Dago" or "Greaser" who rolls cigarettes and stabs people in the back. Hitler and the Nazis have not yet appeared, or are only making their appearance. There will be plenty about them in a little while, but it will be from a strictly patriotic angle (Britain versus Germany) with the real meaning of the struggle kept out of sight as much as possible. As for the Russian Revolution, it is extremely difficult to find any reference to it in any of these papers. When Russia is mentioned at all it is usually in an information-snippet (Example: "There are 29,000 centenarians in the U.S.S.R."), and any reference to the Revolution is indirect and twenty years out of date. The clock has stopped at 1910. Britannia rules the waves and no one has heard of slumps, booms, unemployment, dictatorships, purges or concentration camps.

And in social outlook there is hardly any advance. The snobbishness is somewhat less open than in the *Gem* and *Magnet*—that is the most one can possibly say. To begin with the school-story, always partly dependent on snob-appeal, is by no means eliminated. Every number of a

boys' paper includes at least one school-story, these stories slightly outnumbering the Wild Westerns. The very elaborate fantasy-life of the *Gem* and *Magnet* is not imitated and there is more emphasis on extraneous adventure, but the social atmosphere (old grey stones) is much the same. When a new school is introduced at the beginning of a story we are often told in just those words that "it was a very posh school". From time to time a story appears which is ostensibly directed *against* snobbery. The scholarship-boy (cf. Tom Redwing in the *Magnet*) makes fairly frequent appearances, and what is essentially the same theme is sometimes presented in this form: there is great rivalry between two schools, one of which considers itself more "posh" than the other, and there are fights, practical jokes, football matches, etc., always ending in the discomfiture of the snobs. If one glances very superficially at some of these stories it is possible to imagine that a democratic spirit has crept into the boys' weeklies, but when one looks more closely one sees that they merely reflect the bitter jealousies that exist within the white-collar class. Their real function is to allow the boy who goes to a cheap private school (*not* a Council school) to feel that his school is just as "posh" in the sight of God as Winchester or Eton. The sentiment of school loyalty ("We're better than the fellows down the road"), a thing almost unknown to the real working class, is still kept up. As these stories are written by many different hands they do, of course, vary a good deal in tone. Some are reasonably free from snobbishness, in others money and pedigree are exploited even more shamelessly than in the *Gem* and *Magnet*. In one that I came across an actual *majority* of the boys mentioned were titled.

When working-class characters appear, it is usually either as comics (jokes about tramps, convicts, etc.), or as prize-fighters, acrobats, cowboys, professional footballers and Foreign Legionaries—in other words, as adventurers. There is no facing of the facts about working-class life, or, indeed, about *working* life of any description. Very occasionally one

may come across a realistic description of, say, work in a coal mine, but in all probability it will only be there as the background of some lurid adventure; in any case the central character is not likely to be a coal-miner. Nearly all the time the boy who reads these papers—in nine cases out of ten a boy who is going to spend his life working in a shop, in a factory or in some subordinate job in an office—is led to identify himself with people in positions of command, above all with people who are never troubled by shortage of money. The Lord Peter Wimsey figure, the seeming idiot who drawls and wears a monocle but is always to the fore in moments of danger, turns up over and over again. (This character is a great favourite in Secret Service stories.) And as usual the heroic characters all have to talk B.B.C.; they may talk Scottish or Irish or American, but no one in a star part is ever permitted to drop an aitch. Here it is worth comparing the social atmosphere of the boys' weeklies with that of the women's weeklies, the *Oracle*, the *Family Star*, *Peg's Paper*, etc.

The women's papers are aimed at an older public and are read for the most part by girls who are working for a living. Consequently they are on the surface much more realistic. It is taken for granted, for example, that nearly everyone has to live in a big town and work at a more or less dull job. Sex, so far from being tabu, is *the* subject. The short complete stories, the special feature of these papers, are generally of the "came the dawn" type: the heroine narrowly escapes losing her "boy" to a designing rival, or the "boy" loses his job and has to postpone marriage, but presently gets a better job. The changeling-fantasy (a girl brought up in a poor home is "really" the child of rich parents) is another favourite. Where sensationalism comes in, usually in the serials, it arises out of the more domestic type of crime, such as bigamy, forgery or sometimes murder; no Martians, death-rays or international anarchist gangs. These papers are at any rate aiming at credibility, and they have a link with real life in their correspondence columns, where genuine problems are being

discussed. Ruby M. Ayres's column of advice in the *Oracle*, for instance, is extremely sensible and well-written. And yet the world of the *Oracle* and *Peg's Paper* is a pure fantasy-world. It is the same fantasy all the time: pretending to be richer than you are. The chief impression that one carries away from almost every story in these papers is of a frightful, overwhelming "refinement". Ostensibly the characters are working-class people, but their habits, the interiors of their houses, their clothes, their outlook and, above all, their speech, are entirely middle-class. They are all living at several pounds a week above their income. And needless to say that is just the impression that is intended. The idea is to give the bored factory girl or worn-out mother of five a dream-life in which she pictures herself—not actually as a duchess (that convention has gone out), but as, say, the wife of a bank manager. Not only is a five to six pound a week standard of life set up as the ideal, but it is tacitly assumed that that is how working-class people really *do* live. The major facts are simply not faced. It is admitted, for instance, that people sometimes lose their jobs; but then the dark clouds roll away and they get better jobs instead. No mention of unemployment as something permanent and inevitable, no mention of the dole, no mention of trade-unionism. No suggestion anywhere that there can be anything wrong with the system *as a system*; there are only individual misfortunes, which are generally due to somebody's wickedness and can in any case be put right in the last chapter. Always the dark clouds roll away, the kind employer raises Alfred's wages, and there are jobs for everybody except the drunks. It is still the world of the *Wizard* and the *Gem*, except that there are orange blossoms instead of machine guns.

The outlook inculcated by all these papers is that of a rather exceptionally stupid member of the Navy League in the year 1910. Yes, it may be said, but what does it matter? And in any case, what else do you expect?

Of course no one in his senses would want to turn the so-called penny dreadful into a realistic novel or a Socialist

tract. An adventure-story must of its nature be more or less remote from real life. But, as I have tried to make clear, the unreality of the *Wizard* and the *Gem* is not so artless as it looks. These papers exist because of a specialised demand, because boys at certain ages find it necessary to read about Martians, death-rays, grizzly bears and gangsters. They get what they are looking for, but they get it wrapped up in the illusions which their future employers think suitable for them. To what extent people draw their ideas from fiction is disputable. Personally I believe that most people are influenced far more than they would care to admit by novels, serial stories, films and so forth, and that from this point of view the worst books are often the most important, because they are usually the ones that are read earliest in life. It is probable that many people who would consider themselves extremely sophisticated and "advanced" are actually carrying through life an imaginative background which they acquired in childhood from (for instance) Sapper and Ian Hay. If that is so, the boys' twopenny weeklies are of the deepest importance. Here is the stuff that is read somewhere between the ages of twelve and eighteen by a very large proportion, perhaps an actual majority, of English boys, including many who will never read anything else except newspapers; and along with it they are absorbing a set of beliefs which would be regarded as hopelessly out of date in the Central Office of the Conservative Party. All the better because it is done indirectly, there is being pumped into them the conviction that the major problems of our time do not exist, that there is nothing wrong with laissez-faire capitalism, that foreigners are unimportant comics and that the British Empire is a sort of charity-concern which will last for ever. It is difficult to believe that this is altogether unintentional. Of the twelve papers I have been discussing (i.e. twelve including the *Thriller* and *Detective Weekly*), seven are the property of the Amalgamated Press, which is one of the biggest press-combines in the world and controls more than a hundred different papers. The *Gem* and *Magnet*,

therefore, are closely linked up with the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times*. Moreover, there is no competition. Throughout the whole of this run of papers the differences are negligible, and on this level no others exist. This raises the question, why is there no such thing as a leftwing boys' paper?

At first glance such an idea merely makes one feel slightly sick. It is so horribly easy to imagine what a leftwing boys' paper would be like, if it existed. I remember in 1920 or 1921 some optimistic person handing round Communist tracts among a crowd of public-schoolboys. The tract I received was of the question and answer kind:

Q. "Can a Boy Communist be a Boy Scout, Comrade?"

A. "No, Comrade."

Q. "Why, Comrade?"

A. "Because, Comrade, a Boy Scout must salute the Union Jack, which is the symbol of tyranny and oppression". Etc., etc., etc.

Now, suppose that at this moment somebody started a leftwing paper deliberately aimed at boys of twelve or fourteen. I do not suggest that the whole of its contents would be exactly like the tract I have quoted above, but does anyone doubt that they would be *something* like it? Inevitably such a paper would either consist of dreary uplift or it would be under Communist influence and given over to adulation of Soviet Russia; in either case no normal boy would ever look at it. Highbrow literature apart, the whole of the existing leftwing press, in so far as it is at all vigorously "left", is simply one long tract. The one Socialist paper in England which could live a week on its merits *as a paper* is the *Daily Herald*; and how much Socialism is there in the *Daily Herald*? At this moment, therefore, a paper with a "left" slant and at the same time likely to have an appeal to ordinary boys in their 'teens is something almost beyond hoping for.

But it does not follow that it is impossible. There is no clear reason why every adventure-story should necessarily be mixed up with snobbishness and gutter patriotism. For

after all, the stories in the *Hotspur* and the *Modern Boy* are not Conservative tracts; they are merely adventure-stories with a Conservative bias. It is fairly easy to imagine the process being reversed. It is possible, for instance, to imagine a paper as thrilling and lively as the *Hotspur*, but with subject-matter and "ideology" a little more up to date. It is even possible (though this raises other difficulties) to imagine a women's paper at the same literary level as the *Oracle*, dealing in approximately the same kind of story, but taking rather more account of the realities of working-class life. Such things have been done before, though not in England. In the last years of the Spanish monarchy there was a large output in Spain of leftwing novelettes, some of them evidently of Anarchist origin. Unfortunately at the time when they were appearing I did not see their social significance, and I lost the collection of them that I had, but no doubt copies would still be procurable. In get-up and style of story they were very similar to the English four-penny novelette, except that their inspiration was "left". If, for instance, a story described police pursuing Anarchists through the mountains, it would be from the point of view of the Anarchists and not of the police. An example nearer to hand is the Soviet film *Chapaiev*, which has been shown a number of times in London.

Here several difficult problems present themselves. Their general nature is obvious enough, and I do not want to discuss them. I am merely pointing to the fact that, in England, popular imaginative literature is a field that left-wing thought has never begun to enter. *All* fiction from the novels in the mushroom libraries downwards is censored in the interests of the ruling class. And boys' fiction above all, the blood-and-thunder stuff which nearly every boy devours at some time or other, is sodden in the worst illusions of 1910. The fact is only unimportant if one believes that what is read in childhood leaves no impression behind. The proprietors of these papers evidently believe nothing of the kind, and, after all, they ought to know.

PHILIP TOYNBEE

THE FIRST DAY OF TERM

The station is small and grey, alone in the middle of turnip fields, low hedges and frozen lanes. A double line runs out from the country town. It is carried on a low embankment and it runs straight through the flats without twisting in either direction. The sky is grey all over and sometimes a few flakes of snow fall helplessly out of it, blown seaward a little by the wind. Mr. Caslon takes the bus from the gate of St. Peter's. It is a five mile drive and nothing to see from the windows except the turnips, and sheep on the close-cropped fields. Mr. Caslon's pink face is purple in patches, and he winds his college scarf tighter round his chin. Behind thick glasses his eyes are owlsh.

There is five minutes to wait at the station, and Mr. Caslon paces the platform, beating his feet hard on the frozen asphalt. He begins to whistle "Billy Boy", but when he sucks the cold air into his mouth it is too much for his teeth. The station master accosts him, rubbing his gloved hands together. "Well, sir, how many are you expecting on the 4.25?" "About a dozen. About a dozen," says Mr. Caslon, his voice half muffled by the scarf. "Dare say you'll be glad to have them back!" Mr. Caslon misses the little irony of the station master's question. "Yes!" he says, "Yes, indeed! They're a nice lot of fellows. Really I've quite missed them over Christmas."

Far away up the straight line the small train comes into sight. First there is only white smoke against the sky, but soon, like a black, scarcely moving insect, the train itself is visible. Between the platforms the lines begin to sing, and the singing grows louder until it is drowned by the hoarse puffs of the engine. Mr. Caslon adjusts his glasses nervously.

From the barrier the station master, who is the ticket collector too, looks at him and smiles. For the moment the station is in adult hands, and it has an elderly appearance. But out of the window of the train are poked small faces with black and yellow caps above them. From a long way off Mr. Caslon can make out the faces and the caps. He looks across at the station master and answers his smile with a frightened one of his own. "Here they come!" he sings out, above the noise of the train. Five or six doors burst open and boys are pushing, stumbling and jumping out wasp-like in their caps. Mr. Caslon retreats one step towards the barrier before the torrent. "Oh, sir! How are you, sir! Did you have a nice holls." "Hi, Mason! That's my *Strand*. Leave go of it, you beast! No, I *won't* let you have it. Please, sir, it *is* mine, really." Mr. Caslon shouts in a quavering shriek above the confusion. "Now, are you sure you've all got your luggage out. Mason, let go of that magazine! Don't be an ass!" He blinks at the boys, fumbling in his pocket for the list. "Line up here then! No Mason, facing *me*." The short roll call begins, while the porter pulls trunk after trunk out of the van. A new boy is missing. "Magellan! Is there a new boy here called Magellan?" "Haven't seen him, sir. What a funny name sir! It comes in the geography lesson, doesn't it!"

Back at St. Peter's the Old Man will be sitting in his study, smoking Barney's, arranging the curriculum. All his green tweeds are sodden with tobacco smoke, so that the reek fills every room he's in. To come back without Magellan will mean knocking on the yellow door, creeping into the sickly atmosphere of nicotine, and gulping old excuses which have never yet saved Mr. Caslon from abuse. "Magellan!" he shouts again, in a voice amplified by terror. "I'll go and see if he's hiding in the train, sir", says Mason. Before there is any time for protest Mason is back in the train, running down the corridor and shouting "Magellan! Magellan!" in his thin, eleven-year-old treble. And now Mr. Caslon is shouting "Mason!" and most of the older boys begin to shout either "Mason!" or "Magellan!"

The station master has not seen Mason go back into the train, and now, at a signal from his flag, the train begins to move. "Mason, come back!" there is a wild hyena note of agony in Mr. Caslon's voice, and the boy's frightened face appears at a window. The train is moving faster now, but Mason has opened the carriage door. "Come back!" shouts Mr. Caslon. "No, no! Stay there! Stay there!" But he has changed his mind too late. Mason has shut his eyes and stepped down on to the platform. He has fallen and rolled over and over like a small stick caught by the wind. There is a gasp from all the boys, and their small horrified faces are gazing at the still figure, too horrified to talk. The station master has hurried up to Mason, and Mr. Caslon follows him, his eyes beseeching a reassuring diagnosis. Together they turn the boy on his back, and the station master feels him all over with steady hands. "I should think it's just a small concussion," he says. "Better take him into the waiting room. I'll get a drop of brandy." Slowly behind them the other boys have advanced, craning forward and whispering to each other. "Is he dead, sir?" Mr. Caslon turns on them, his innocent face as savage as a wild animal. "Get outside the station, the lot of you! What the devil do you mean by hanging round! Go on; get OUT!" Still whispering they turn away from him and huddle away towards the road. The three new boys are together, and one of them bursts suddenly into loud sobs.

In the waiting room the station master and Mr. Caslon have laid Mason on a bench. While the station master is away fetching brandy Mr. Caslon has time to return to the yellow door and the tweeded little man inside it. He is holding Mason's limp hand, massaging it with his fingers and staring blindly at the wall. But in his mind is a mysterious guilt which is more than his usual self-contempt, and far more than his fear of the headmaster. It is elusive, but horrible and shocking. Only the arrival of the station master prevents him discovering its cause. The brandy soon revives Mason, who comes sleepily to his senses and begins to cry. "It's my back, sir. My back is hurting terribly."

"All right, sonny!" says the station master. "We'll just turn you over and have a look at it. Learned something about this out in Flanders." Mason screams as the station master's cold hand runs deftly up his spine. But there's nothing broken; only a bruise or two, and a cut on the crown of his head. "Lay him out flat on the back seat of the bus, and the little chap'll be all right. Come on, sonny, that's the way! Upsy-daisy!" For a moment Mr. Caslon's terrors are buried in gratitude and admiration.

The boys look cold and small. They are no longer noisy and as Mr. Caslon leads Mason out to the station bus they keep several yards away from him, saying nothing. They are far more terrifying than the shouting demons who had jumped out of the train. Mason groans a little, but it is clear enough that there is nothing seriously wrong with him. "Come on, now!" says Mr. Caslon. "In you all get. Mason's going to have the back seat to himself. He's had quite a nasty fall." Their relief seems to be mingled with disappointment. They whine and yap as they climb into the bus, and Mr. Caslon stands wearily by the door, counting them as they go in. He sits on the back seat beside Mason, wrapping him round with a travelling rug and rolling up his own scarf for a cushion. Immediately in front of him sit the three new boys. Until now he has had no time for them. "You three! Let's just make sure which of you's which! Brown? Meade? Etherington? I see. Well, here you are! St. Peter's is about five miles away, but it doesn't take long to get there. Now then, Etherington, try and put away that handkerchief. You'll find you have quite a jolly time, you know." But the small boy with the pinched shrew's face only sobs harder. Mr. Caslon has often had to deal with home-sick boys; but he has never yet found any way of curing them. Suddenly Etherington lifts up his puffed red eyes. "He's going to die. I'm *sure* he's going to die." Mr. Caslon gulps. He is gulping down his rage against the little crying idiot. "Now, don't be so silly, Etherington! Mason has just got a bit of a bruise on his back. He'll be up and about in a day or two." But Etherington goes on

crying.

The bus crawls through the narrow lanes, often brushing small icicles from the bushes on each side. A shrill draught whistles along the insides of the windows. Outside the snow begins to fall quite heavily, quickly covering the dry earth of the turnip fields.

"Here we are, back again!

Lots of work and lots of pain!"

All the boys are droaning this together, and there is a desperate, exaggerated flatness in their voices.

"Silly old Latin. Silly old Greek.

And plenty of canes to make me squeak."

Mason groans from time to time. It is clear that he is looking forward to a long period in the Sick Room. The boys in front have forgotten about him. They have begun to whisper and look over their shoulders at Etherington and laugh. One mocking voice chants: "Cry baby! Cry baby! Cry baby! Cry baby! Cry!"

Mr. Caslon jumps to his feet, and his trilby hat is crushed against the ceiling. "Markham! I shall report that to the headmaster. You know perfectly well what he thinks about people who bully new boys." There is silence for a few moments. To be reported to the headmaster is a thing which terrifies them all. But by the time the bus turns the last corner they are chanting again: even one of the new boys has joined them.

"Here we are, back again!

Lots of work and lots of pain!"

The bus creeps into the drive and all the boys let out a great groan together. It is nearly dark by now, but the confused block of buildings ahead is clear against the snowy fields. A few lights are shining, and there is a narrow crack of light between the curtains of the headmaster's study. It is only as he is shepherding the boys through the open door that Mr. Caslon remembers Magellan. A snow flake falls cunningly inside his neck, and melts slowly there. He goes back to the bus and lifts Mason out. The boy begins to groan louder than ever, and as he hobbles through the

porch he even gives a short piercing scream. Irresistibly Mr. Caslon pinches him hard on the shoulder and the boy screams again: "Oh, sir! You're hurting me." "Nonsense Mason! I know perfectly well you're shamming. I've a good mind to make you walk by yourself." "Oh, please don't, sir. Really I couldn't." Mason is looking across the hall; his appeal has been made to someone else. Mr. Caslon looks up and sees the matron standing there, her coarse wrinkled face more malignant than ever and her arms crossed on her pouting bosom. "All right, Mr. Caslon. The boys have told me all about it. Will you please help Mason up to the sick room!" On the stairs is the smell of sweet stale tea, floor polish and disinfectant. "Stop making that noise at once, Mason!" Mason stops, but leans harder than ever on Mr. Caslon's arm. In the sick room the matron nods quietly; "Thank you, Mr. Caslon! And now I think the Head would like to see you."

At the bottom of the stairs Markham is waiting. He has yellow hair sticking up all over his head, and his face is white between large rare freckles. His bare knees are dirty and there is a line of dirt across his cheek. "Please, sir, I'm sorry about being unkind to the new boy." Mr. Caslon stands for a moment with one hand on the bannisters blinking at the small ugly boy in front of him. "What's that, Markham?" he says, but even when the boy repeats his shrill impossible apology Mr. Caslon hardly listens. "Yes, Markham!" he says. "Yes, yes!"

The first knock on the door is never answered, however loud and distinct. It is part of the ceremony of terror. Mr. Caslon knocks again and the high familiar voice shouts two petulant "Come ins", as though Mr. Caslon should have been there long ago.

Upstairs Etherington has found a black cupboard on the landing. The smell of camphor reminds him of his mother's chest of drawers, and he cries unrestrainedly. Crying is such a luxury of self-expression that when the dry awful moment of exhaustion comes Etherington gulps and stutters in his efforts to bring more tears to his eyes. But everything is

his head is dry and aching. In the darkness he can still see the red-faced master shrieking on the platform and the big boy's frightened face at the window of the moving train. The whole school seems full of fear, and his own is only part of something overpowering and permanent. Feet rattle on the landing and Etherington crouches further into the tangled confusion of clothes. The matron goes past, glad that term has begun again. Behind her sour enormous face is the smile of power. In the sick room she rubs Mason's back with embrocation, softly, for fear of giving him the least excuse for a malingering groan.

Downstairs the boys are at their lockers. Markham's face is grim and serious. "Do you think Podge-face will really tell?" Nobody cares. In fact Markham knows that most of them would be glad if Podge-face told. When one of them suffers the others feel more secure by contrast. Also they like excitement. Brown and Meade are standing together, surrounded by half a dozen older boys. "What does your father do? Ever been to school before? Podge-face is all right; you wait till you see old Guzzler." Brown answers chattily. He is far more nervous than the quieter Meade. "I don't suppose he can beat as hard as my father; my father's a soldier. What a funny fool Mr. Caslon is." Meade stands quite still and says nothing except when he is asked a question. His eyes are big and soft and stupid.

The janitor rings the bell. Lockers are slammed down and all the boys hurry to the dining room; sheafs of bare knees and untidy grey stockings. There are plates of thick bread and butter, bowls of raspberry jam and white enamelled tea pots. The matron is standing at one end of the table, and the older boys come up to shake hands with her. "Good evening, matron! Hope you've had a good holls." The wind is blowing through a top window, healthy with the sea air and the snow.

In the headmaster's study Mr. Caslon is sitting on a wooden chair. There is a good coal fire burning here; it is the warmest room in the school. The little man in green tweeds is looking at Mr. Caslon through a dense fog of

tobacco smoke. "It didn't occur to you to forbid Mason to get on to the train! Have you thought of the enjoyable task I shall have writing to his parents to tell them that their son has met with a serious accident on the very first day of term?" It is a great surprise to Mr. Caslon to realise that he has hardly been listening to the headmaster. Mason is in the sick room and Magellan, the new boy, has been lost; but Mr. Caslon is preoccupied, going over in his mind every detail of the few minutes between the arrival of the train and the guilt which had attacked him in the waiting room. The headmaster's high vibrant voice continues its breathless monotone. There is no need to answer and Mr. Caslon pursues his own thoughts peacefully. He knows that he is a timid man, and that anything which can make him disregard the Head must be of very great importance. Thoughtlessly he kicks at the fire with his thick country shoe. Sparks fly up the chimney and there is a sudden peculiar silence. "You were listening to me, I hope," says Mr. Caslon. But Mr. Caslon has suddenly understood his guilt. He looks at the headmaster with tired desperate eyes. "Yes, sir! I'm very sorry indeed this should have happened. I show great carelessness on my part."

Passing the closed door of the dining room Mr. Caslon hears the shrill chatter of children. He is alone in the bar hall, and he stands there for a moment, desperately and positively pleased to be alone.

Mason is quite all right; but at the moment when the small boy jumped and rolled along the platform Mr. Caslon hoped that he would be killed or badly hurt. It seems to him that this was not simply a spontaneous impulse of irritation. It was the release of something fundamental in him. He hates the boys and the masters and the matron, but the boys more than anybody else. His hatred of the boys is so clamorous that he goes to the dining room door and opens it. The noise is like the discordant shriek of starlings. All down the two long tables fifty small inhuman faces are gabbling with a stained competitive eagerness. "Jam, please!" "Bread and butter, please!" It seems to

Mr. Caslon that there is no more innocence in children than in rats or tigers. Ignorance is a different quality altogether. He sits down heavily at the end of one of the tables and stretches for a piece of bread and butter. "Are you taking us for Maths this term, sir?" The voice of this small boy is full of coquetry: when he speaks to his other neighbour his tone is far less sweet. They are gawkish and undeveloped. Their small minds are already trained to all the rules of avoiding unpopularity. Mr. Caslon drinks his tea, and, looking at the boys, he knows that they will be with him all his life.

L. S. LITTLE

BARRENNESS

I sawed, and the old lilac powdered
Into white feebleness and its fleshy
Branches split in my hands despondently
While the fencing was cut on the benches.

It had never blossomed, there had been
No enhancing of its wizened bough-blackness
But dull hesitant leaves as though a ban
On its life had condemned it to sickness.

It had puny hold on the earth
Yet now, though its roots served no purpose
I half-paused, and felt it beneath
My hands to kill it, while wandering creepers

Protectingly lay on it pleading,
And March's untimely sun, seeming
To promise it long-awaited for blooming,
Sneered at the fence superceding.

STEPHEN SPENDER

SEPTEMBER JOURNAL

(Continued)

SEPTEMBER 12TH.

Today I applied for a job as a translator at the War Office. Yesterday I received a printed slip from the Ministry of Information saying that my name was on a list of writers who may be used later. But I don't think I have a chance, as I'm told that they are very overcrowded with applicants. Nor do I think that the War Office will want me, as there must be many translators far better qualified. But as long as I can write and read a good deal each day, I am not really bothering. What I would like most is to complete three books, this Journal, a novel and a book of poems, before I am called up.

I want to remember all I can about Ernst Robert Curtius.

For some reason, E—— became very excited at the idea of our meeting. He therefore arranged that I should go specially to Baden Baden in order to meet Ernst Robert. What I find difficult to explain is my own willingness to fall in with this proposal. It may have been that I had in any case later to meet my grandmother at Hamburg, so that it was quite convenient; or it may have been due to a certain trustfulness and credulity in my nature which I still pay dearly for, and which, in those days led me to fall in with every suggestion that was made to me. I might have been less willing had I reflected that Curtius might not want to see me.

This thought did not trouble me. I simply got out of the train, booked a room in a hotel and, as soon as I had washed, walked straight to the house where Ernst Robert was staying. I do not remember the details, I only remember the feeling of that first meeting. As far as I can recall the house was outside the town and I had to walk some

way along a road past various hotels and then along a path through the edge of woods before I came to it. I think that I was shown into a room on the first floor, and perhaps there was a cold meal with fruit and wine laid on a table with a white cloth spread over it. There were bay windows opening out on to a balcony, and a pleasant freshness of the forest at evening filled the room. Everything, I think, gave me an impression of coolness, and for some reason I thought that the host and hostess were ill. The host, whose name I never knew, was dressed in a white suit, and both he and his wife seemed pale.

I did not stay long enough to get to know them, for Curtius immediately stepped forward, grasped my hand firmly and told his friends that he would go to a Bierhalle in Baden with me.

Railway journeys have a disconcerting effect on me. They stimulate me so much that all my usual impressions seem to flow much faster, with the train, like a film that is shown very quickly. I cannot check this. In spite of myself every sort of sensation pours through my mind during a train journey, and when I was younger and played at "thinking books" a project for some unwritten novel or play would force all its images on to me during a journey. This excess of stimulation leaves me afterwards in a state of drugged tiredness in which I appear stupid to myself and either am able to talk revealingly, or else get confused in every word I say. I was in this mood that first evening, and I talked very freely and indiscreetly to Ernst Robert about my life at Hamburg.

He listened to me with an amusement which slightly yet affectionately was laughing at as well as with me. It forgave a lot. In my deepest friendships, with Auden, with Christopher Isherwood and with Curtius, I have been conscious of being thus "taken with a pinch of salt". Sometimes it is disconcerting to be laughed at when one is serious, but as long as it is done affectionately, one is grateful to people who enable one to see oneself a little from the outside. From the first, Ernst Robert's attitude

to me was one of gentle raillery; and I think that because he saw so far beyond me and at the same time loved me, I owe more to him than to any other older person.

Being anxious to impress him, I talked about literature, and especially about Dostoievsky, whom I was reading then. I was interested in madness, partly because at school and Oxford I had been taught to regard myself as mad, and because Auden, who, when he was an undergraduate, was anxious to maintain a certain superiority over his contemporaries, always treated me as a lunatic! Experiences like my cerebral excitement during train journeys, my excessive credulity, my lack of a complete understanding with even my best friends, so that I always felt they stood to some extent *outside* me—bore out the theory of madness. Above all, I was, like everyone, in search of that ecstasy which is so lacking in our civilisation that even war and violence are to some people a secret consolation in a world of routine governed by material values; that ecstasy which justifies every kind of unscrupulousness and adventurousness in private life. In Hamburg E——, with his collector's zeal had discovered an expressionist artist, a woman with a real talent for drawing, recently released from a lunatic asylum where she had done some really terrifying portraits of the lunatics. In Hamburg, she had done a portrait of me making me look wild and mad. I was proud of this, and took Ernst Robert to my hotel bedroom to see it. But, so far from being impressed or interested, he would scarcely even look at it. He said that it was mad and that I did not need to be mad.

During the next few days I walked much with him in the Black Forest, we went swimming together, we drank beer every evening. He criticised Dostoievsky, he told me to read other books than the Russians, particularly the French. I showed him poems I had written, and, to my surprise, instead of reading them with the superiority which I might have expected from a scholar immersed in the world's greatest literature, he read them with evident delight, and made some translations of them, which were

afterwards published in the *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*. He listened to my accounts of my life at Hamburg, and scandalised me by treating this life which I thought of so seriously, simply as pornography in which he was unashamedly interested. But to him it was pornography, it was not, as it then appeared to me, ecstasy.

SEPTEMBER 15TH.

I shall try to make this journal into a book with several levels of time, present and past, which I am able to move in as I choose. During these first days of the war I have tended to live in the past, partly because the present is so painful, partly because it is so fragmentary and undecided. We live in a kind of vacuum now in which the events on which we are waiting have not yet caught up on us, though our hour is very near. We have seen the whirlwind in China, in Central Europe, in Spain, in Poland, and now we ourselves are the next on the list. If I let my mind drift on the present, I have terrible day dreams. Last night, walking the streets in the blackout I had one of an aggressive alliance between Germany and Russia which would not only destroy the whole of the rest of Europe, but divide it utterly on questions of principle. Another of my unpleasant day dreams is a growing fear that this is only the first of a series of wars. This springs from the following reflections. Supposing the Allies win the war, what sort of peace will they make? The answer is that they must either repeat the mistakes of the Treaty of Versailles, or else establish Germany as a strong power under a military dictatorship.

I think that this time they will probably plump for the military dictatorship. What they hope for, I suppose, is a military coup in Germany, whereby the generals will get rid of Hitler, and sue for peace. A smashing victory for the Allies would mean complete internal collapse for Germany, followed perhaps by a Communist Revolution backed by Russia, and probably a war of reactionary intervention which would be boycotted by the workers here and

in France. I am sure they do not want that. They are hoping that the military caste in Germany will be pacific and reactionary. But I fear that they are wrong. Hitler has really transformed and stupefied Germany into a military camp, and we must choose between a socialist Germany and a more or less permanent state of war.

Supposing there were an aggressive alliance between Stalin and Hitler, on the understanding that Germany is socialized, you would then get a revolution dictated to the rest of Europe by the combined air fleets of Russia and Germany, and including the most rigid tyranny and suppression of personal opinion. In the long run, it might be a good thing, because at any rate it would mean the breakdown of this tragic cycle of rival nationalisms. But it would mean the surrender of everything we call freedom in our lifetime. If such a combination occurred, I think I would become a pacifist, because nothing would then seem to me worth fighting for.

I do not think these speculations are of much value, it is better to go back to the little world I have some concrete understanding of, and the only point in giving rein to the nightmare is to preserve a sense of proportion: to show I am aware of the fact that the life of myself and mine is like Lear's hut on the moor, in the thunderstorm, and filled with madness from within and without.

My mind is terrible, but there are a dozen people worse off than I whom I know, so I should not complain. There is Fini whose brother is a socialist made to fight in an Austrian division for Germany, there are one or two Germans I know here who are interned. The whole of Europe is filled with people violently separated from those they love, whose homes and children are torn from them, who search for their possessions in a heap of ashes. Compared with these brutal realities, my luxury relationship and luxury separation seem an extravagant game of people who are millionaires in the way they spend their feelings. I ought to be glad to be alone and away from all this nonsense. Perhaps in the next few years, it is only people who are alone who will be able to

put their minds in order and realise what is going on round them.

SEPTEMBER 18TH.

When our existences are threatened, the most sensible thing is to start living as though one could see beyond the darkness of the tunnel to the light outside. However closely one becomes involved in the struggle from day to day, one must have a long term view of the final issues for civilization, and also for reconstructing people's personal lives. Politics alter from day to day and therefore lack continuity: for this reason private life and personal standards become important because they have a continuity which one mustn't allow to be interrupted by outside events.

SEPTEMBER 19TH.

With Curtius I was in contact with the Germany of Goethe, Hoelderlin and Schiller. That is an Apollonian Germany, a Germany of the sun, not the Dionysian Germany of Hitler who rouses himself from a torpid dullness into a frenzy of words and actions. After the war and the blockade, perhaps even the Germans who lay with no clothes on, crucified by the sun, expressed the need for a Germany of 'Light, more Light.'

It was not the madness of Hoelderlin that Curtius liked but the peaceful development of a poem such as *Brot und Wein* in which the sun-steeped and vine-bearing German landscape is lifted at the end of the poem into a unity with the German conception of Greece. We read Hoelderlin together, and later on the poems of the Greek Anthology, particularly the erotic ones, because he had a taste for such poetry.

Curtius was an egoist, an egoist of the liberal, Goethe tradition. His life was organized with an enlightened selfishness: he did not take more than he could take, nor give more than he could give. He would not put himself out, even for his best friends, if he thought that his own resilience

was going to be depressed by their needs. One could say, perhaps, that he was a fair-weather friend. Once, when I was hard up, I wrote asking him if he could introduce me to people in Berlin to whom I could give English lessons. He wrote back about other things, ending his letter with the curt "leider kann ich keiner Verbindungen für Ihnen im Berlin schaffen." I asked a friend of his about this, and he told me how at a period of crisis and confusion in his life, Ernst Robert had cut himself off from him completely. I myself have a tendency in my relationships with people never to refuse anything, and often to promise far more than I can undertake. I know how this leads to a feeling of resentment which affects one's relationships with people, and to a fear of making new acquaintances who may plunge one into new commitments. Ernst Robert remained happy and broad and objective. He would not lose this by identifying himself with others in their predicaments.

I do not mean that he was unsympathetic, but that he was un-self-sacrificing because what he had was of too great an objective value to himself and to others to sacrifice. He did not enter into their lives because his generosity lay in the freedom with which they could enter into his.

If one accepted this, he gave a great deal.

Once when I was staying at Bonn, I went into Cologne for a night and got into an extremely nasty scrape. I liked going to very squalid places and I went to a hotel near the railway station, in the lowest part of the town. When I got into bed I didn't notice that the lock of the door was on the outside instead of the inside, so that the guests in this hotel were like prisoners locked into their rooms, instead of guests who could lock out intruders. In the middle of the night the door was flung open and a man came who put his hands to my throat and threatened to throttle me unless I gave him my money. He was much stronger than I, and I was undressed, so I asked him to pass me my clothes. He did this, and I gave him my money. It amounted to about 60 or 70 marks, which he did not seem to think enough, so he said he would take my coat as well. I pro-

tested, but it did not seem much use, so I asked him to leave me a mark at least, to pay my fare back to Bonn. He flung a mark down on the marble-topped table beside my bed, and ran out of the room. I lay in bed staring into the darkness and listening to the noises from outside of whores talking and screaming, and a continuous sound like water running away into the darkness. I felt as though I had reached the goal of something horrible and mysterious in my life, as though it were unfolded from my own flesh and a part of myself. I did not resent the theft, because I thought of it as something I had let myself in for. I did not blame the thief at all, for what had happened seemed an automatic consequence of my choosing this way of life, and, in short, I felt passive, as though a whole process which I had called into being by my own actions were now happening to me, and I knew that I would never escape from this. Because I knew this, it was very difficult for me to resist, but at last I realised that I must do something, so I sat up in bed and shouted for the landlord. A few minutes later, he and two or three other men came into the room, switching on the light, and standing round my bed as though I were an invalid, seriously ill, and they were the specialists whom I had summoned. "Why are you making such a noise in my respectable hotel?" asked the landlord, in injured tones, "until you came here, I always had the highest reputation. I shall call the police." "For heaven's sake, do call them," I answered, feeling that I was now prepared for any kind of disgrace, "I would like to speak to them very much." This seemed to make him hesitate, and he said quite kindly, "Why, what do you want then?" "Someone in your hotel has just stolen all my money," I said. "This is a disgrace," said the landlord, "I won't have things like this going on in my hotel. Why do you come here and bring this disgrace on me?" "It isn't my fault," I answered, "I am very sorry. I don't mind my money being stolen, but I must have my coat and also an assurance that my trousers won't be stolen, else I won't be able to get home." "Nothing else will be stolen," said

the landlord honourably, "I can assure you of that." "Well, might I at least have my coat back?" I asked. He nodded to one of the other men who left the room and returned a few seconds later with my coat on his arm. Then he said "Good night," reassuringly, and they left the room.

I felt that nothing else was likely to happen, but I could not sleep, and continued to lie with eyes open in a waking nightmare. At last it was dawn. Then for the first time it occurred to me that when I arrived on the previous night, I had been made to pay my bill before taking a room. Therefore there was not the slightest reason why I should stay any longer. It surprised me to realise that I was free and that nothing final had happened. I quickly put on my clothes and ran downstairs and out of the hotel, without anyone stopping me. I ran until I came to the river. Outside it was cold and raw. In the gray light the cathedral and the bridges and the modern Exhibition Building had a photographic quality. Suddenly I started laughing. I had a gay sensation of release.

After an hour or so of waiting, I went back to Bonn. When I had rested and changed, I called on Ernst Robert, partly to borrow some money from him. When he saw that I was upset he took me for a walk by the Rhine. Full of shame, I told him my story. But to my surprise, instead of being shocked, disappointed or upset, he started laughing, and, putting his arm round me, patted my shoulder.

While I have been writing this last page and a half, I have had the wireless on, performing Hitler's latest speech. His voice varies from a cavernous rumbling to the peaks of an exalted hysteria from which he shrieks like a raucous beast of prey, until the whole chorus of his followers breaks into a stormy night's thunder of triumphant hatred. Undoubtedly there is something disintegrating about that voice, that applause, and everything they stand for. The cities of one's mind seem to be bombarded, as though a threat could make them fall to pieces. He speaks of a new, terrible, secret weapon, which, if the English oppose him, he will use. When he does this, I feel as though the world

could be destroyed by pressing a button, and he were a madman who had access to this button and was about to press it.

I go to the gramophone and play *Agnus Dei* and *Et in Spiritum* from Bach's Mass in B minor. During the weekend, in Sussex, I played records from Gluck's *Orpheus*. Reality and exaltation lie in those transparent harmonies, not in the violence and high-pitched shrieks of hysteria. One need not ever be afraid that death and destruction are the real world. They are the real world broken to bits. It is possible that I shall be broken and unable to understand Gluck's wonderfully formative and coherent music any longer. The part of my mind that composes itself into a dance or a crystal when I hear this music, will be a cathedral that has been bombed. But that is no tragedy. It is only an accident. It would be a tragedy only if the destructive form of a life and a civilization which has met with decay were the final goal of man, instead of the fragments of an experiment which has been discarded.

SEPTEMBER 29TH.

The probability is that Germany will come more and more under Russian influence, as her militarized state and economy become further socialized. This process will probably absorb all the near Eastern countries. Then our war will develop into a war of intervention against a revolutionary situation in central Europe. At the same time, the war in its early stages will provide the impetus for such a revolution.

The English communists have now twisted again and say that we should make peace on what they call "the Russian terms". I think that they are probably insincere in this. What they want is what Russia wants: i.e. to let the war go on, while dissociating themselves from it and using it as a means of getting their own ends. Unfortunately the continuance of the war not only suits the hidden communist aims, it is also essential to the British Empire. If we gave up, Germany and Russia would be able to dictate any terms

they like in the East of Europe, France would become a minor power, the British would have lost all prestige, and the Dominions would adopt a policy of *sauf qui peut*, which would lead to the break up of the Empire. If the war leads to a Revolution under the influence of Russia, involving the whole of central Europe, we shall at least have a breathing space, as the Red Armies will be occupied in regulating this vast new internal situation.

Then what are we fighting for? I think that we ought to be fighting a kind of defensive rearguard action against the development of absolutely chaotic and brutal conditions. In a way, I think the German-Soviet Pact holds out a hope for the future because (a) It may lead to a breakdown of the present system of warring nationalisms. (b) The larger the bloc becomes the less important becomes the Prussian element in it. If it extends from Moscow to Berlin, the rights of the Czechs will have to be considered. (c) Communism may, if it expands, recover something of its former liberating zeal. In short, the larger the movement becomes, the more likely it is to overthrow the tyrants who have started it. First Mussolini becomes a cypher, then Hitler, last perhaps Stalin.

In 1929-31, one saw for a short time clearly enough the direction things were taking. Then, for some people, the conditions they were accustomed to re-established themselves, there was "recovery", and for ten years there was in England and France a precarious state of suspense. Now we see again the plot of our drama. But it may take a longer time than we expect to unfold itself.

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The Blackout time gets a few minutes earlier each evening, so one notices more than ever the drawing in of the Autumn evenings. Actually, the weather has been particularly fine lately, the streets glitter a biscuit yellow all day, the crowds waiting at the bus stops for the few buses give the town an air of festivity, the sand bags on the side walks, the strips of paper on the windows, the balloons in

the sky, are all sufficiently new in the bright sunlight to be interesting and almost gay.

I went for a few minutes to a party after lunch, then feeling tired, and quite incapable of looking happy and keeping up a conversation, came home and lay down. I couldn't help imagining the comfort of her when her legs are drawn up against her breasts, her hands clasp her ankles, and her head rests on her knees, with the hair falling over them.

I am ashamed of these weak feelings. Weakness isn't going to help anyone today. It is only going to encourage a mood of self-pity which at once isolates people and drains away the energy around them. But after all I can't falsify things here. I am not writing down everything about myself as an example. Nor ought I to condemn myself. The important thing is to criticise and learn. I think that above all people ought to be courageous and strong today. For example, I ought to work all day. There is no excuse for my failure in this respect. What holds me back is of course the fear of writing badly, the fear of not being able to express myself, lack of inspiration and the pain involved when one discovers the failures in oneself. But all that is subjective. What one wants is people who can create more strongly than bombing 'planes can destroy and burn more fiercely with life than incendiary bombs do with death. We want strength, lucidity, a clear line in writing, intellectual conviction, faith in life, a calm indifference to systematised political thought. I ought to be the saint of such a task.

When I drew the blinds I felt the Autumn chill in my bones, and because of the decision I have taken which is simply a recognition of existing facts, I had a sense of the desolation of the world. Above all, the world should be home, it should be somewhere where everyone has his place, is surrounded by the simple machinery, the task, the house, the furniture, the companion, the river, the trees or streets which assure him that he is loved. Everything should be rooted. This is the simplest thing in life, it is the cocoon that surrounds childhood, it is the simple security of the

flesh and the kiss and the fireplace and the setting sun which brings him home. The hands that destroy this homeliness whether in children or grown up people are ripping the child in all of us that never leaves the womb away from the womb, and tearing the belly of the mother into ribbons. No one should want anything except to find his place in life, the centre of his potentiality to love and be loved.

Yet if love is the essential thing in life, loss of it is the fiend which enters certain bodies and tears the life around them into shreds. The depradations of the loveless and the homeless who seek power over their fellow beings, can be seen everywhere today. The world suffers from the worst and least necessary of mental illnesses—homesickness. The papers are filled with photographs, and have been now for years, of those who have been driven out of their homes—the endless rustle of shuffling peasant feet through the dust all night along the road outside Malaga, the family with their possessions piled up on a cart outside a burning Polish farmhouse, the widow searching amongst the ruins of her house for a souvenir. They are driven from the little hole which surrounded and comforted them, into the elemental world of alien stones and light.

Most homeless of all, little shreds of matter from distant countries that have nothing to do with them, are driven through their flesh. The whole universe of Outside enters their bodies—a fragment of a bomb, a bullet.

After that, in the world today there is the desolation of ideas. In times of war and revolution, the great comfort has always been that in place of home there is the home of the idea. Patriotism suddenly becomes the home. One goes out into the street and finds that everyone is friendly, everyone is a brother or sister of everyone else, because the family of the homeland is threatened. The home of the idea, patriotism, revolutionary fervour, can knit people together into a spasmodic unity which is even stronger than the happiest family life. But today, for hundreds of people, even that consolation is denied to them. The greatest desolation in the world is produced by the confusion of ideas.

Many can no longer fight for their country with any conviction, which is to fight for the home of the Past. And the Home of the Future, Revolution, is so compromised that only the most ideological thinkers are able to want to fight for that, either. The world appears a desert. There is no woman, there are no children, there is no faith, there is no cause.

The moon shines above the London streets during the blackouts like an island in the sky. The streets become rivers of light. The houses become feathery, soft, undefined, aspiring, so that any part of this town might be the most beautiful city in the world, sleeping amongst silk and water. And the moon takes a farewell look at our civilization everywhere. I have seen it as an omen in Valencia, Barcelona, and Madrid, also. Only the houses were not plumed, feathery, soft, there: the moon was brighter, and they seemed made of white bone.

(To be concluded)